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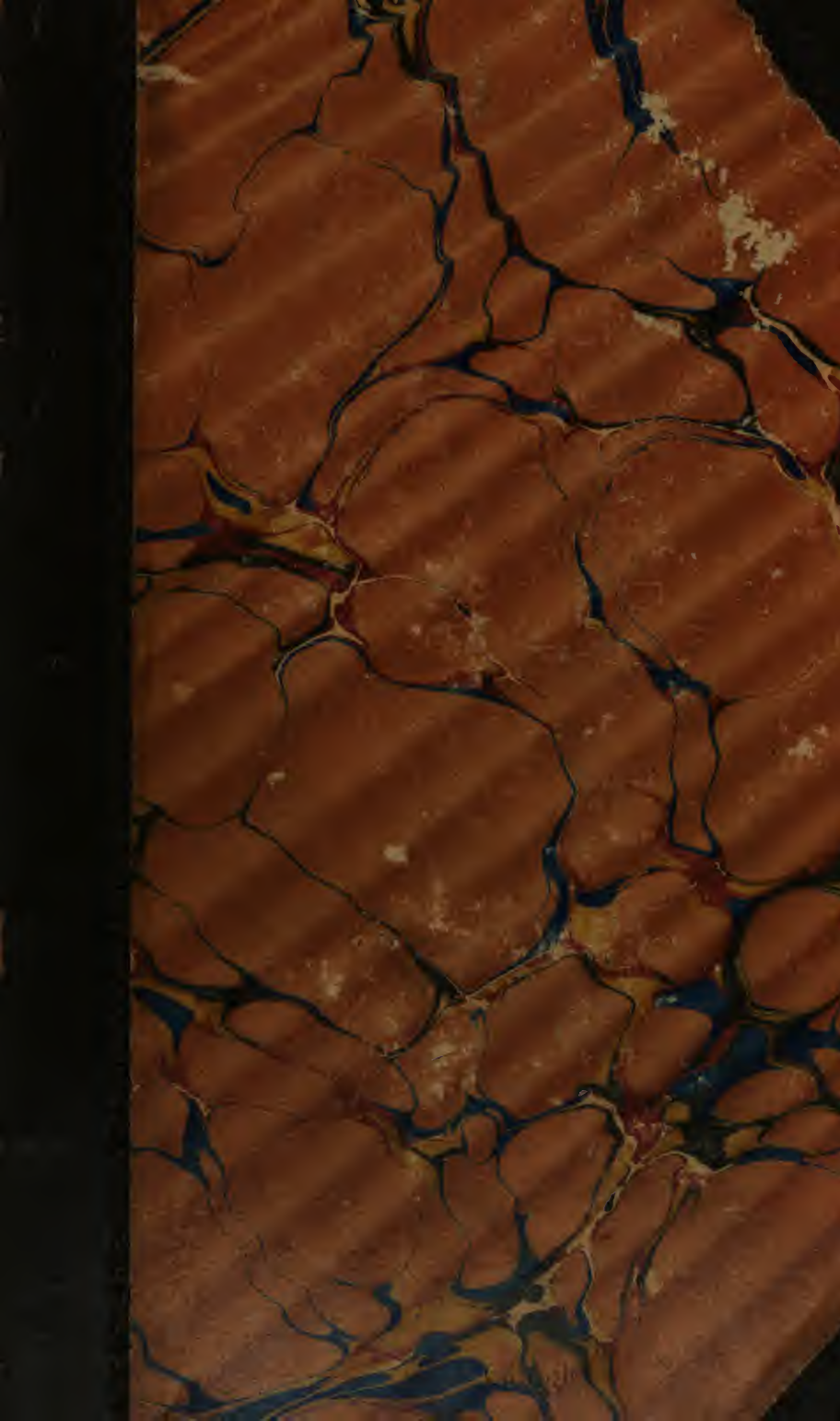
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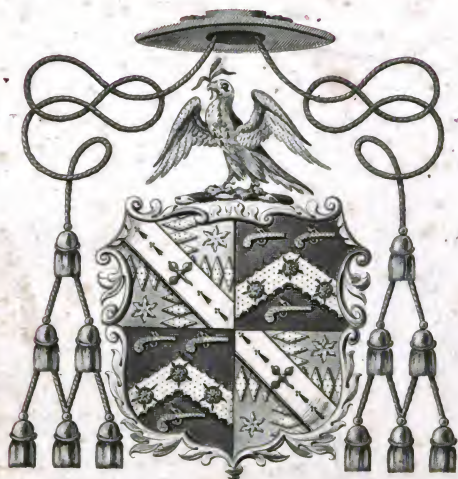
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EN TOUT PARFAIT

The Very Rev. Charles Parfitt.



18-D-15.

Bt. from Prior Park, Bath.

100 e. 1525

 2

SERMONS
AND
MORAL DISCOURSES,

FOR ALL THE
SUNDAYS AND PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS

OF THE YEAR,

ON THE

MOST IMPORTANT TRUTHS AND MAXIMS OF THE
GOSPEL.

BY THE

REV. W. GAHAN, O. S. A. EX-PROV.

*Preach the Word, urge in Season and out of Season : Reprove, beseech
rebuke in all Patience and Doctrine.*

2 Tim. c. iv. v. 2.

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SERMONS

AND

MORAL DISCOURSES,

&c. &c.

PENTECOST SUNDAY.

On the Descent of the Holy Ghost.

Cum complerentur dies Pentecostes, repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto, et coeperunt loqui. *Acts. c. ii. v. 4.*

When the days of Pentecost were accomplished, all the Disciples were replenished with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak. Acts. c. ii. v. 4.

THE solemnity of Pentecost is commonly called *Whitsuntide*, from the ancient custom of clothing Catechumens, or newly-baptized Christians, in white garments during the ensuing octave, in order to denote the sanctity and spotless innocence that the Sacrament of Baptism confers on the soul. The Church finds herself at this time happily situated between Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, redeemed by the one and conducted by the other. Jesus Christ ascends into Heaven to be the pledge and mediator of our eternal happiness: the Holy Ghost descends to the earth to be our guide and comforter in this vale of miseries. Jesus Christ mounts up into the celestial sanctuary to complete the functions of his priesthood, and to perform the office of our advocate with the Father: the Holy Ghost comes down from the Heavens to abide with the faithful to the end of the world, to teach them all truth, to inflame them with the fire of divine love, and to prevent the Church from being ever overpowered by the gates of hell. Jesus Christ ascends in order to prepare a place for us above, and to form never-fading Crowns for his elect and faithful servants: the Holy Ghost descends in order to animate us here below, to sustain the conflicts and gain the victories that must neces-

sarily be gained before we can expect to be crowned. Jesus Christ, elevated to the bosom of his heavenly Father, gives man a lasting proof, and a well grounded hope of future glory and immortality; the Holy Ghost penetrates to the heart of man to illumine and purify him with the rays of his all-powerful grace.

The descent of the Holy Ghost was the price of the sacred blood of Jesus Christ, a favour owing to his infinite merits, and the last seal of our redemption. The disciples were not fit to receive this Divine Spirit till after the visible departure of our Blessed Redeemer from this world; for, as St. Augustine remarks, they had so tender an affection and regard for their dear Lord and Master, that they could not bear his absence without great reluctance and being seized with sadness. This sensibility being the effect of nature rather than of grace, was sufficient to put a stop to the coming of the Holy Ghost, for which reason Christ told them, John, ch. xvi. v. 7. *that it was expedient for them that he should go from them, and that if he did not go the Paraclete would not come, but if he went he would send him to them.* The descent of the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, changed them in a moment into other men, purified their hearts and consumed the dross of their earthly affections; it inflamed them with zeal and gratitude, and banished all their apprehensions and all symptoms of fear and anxiety; it made them forget their own safety to publish their Master's divinity, and sacrifice their lives for his honour and glory, and for the establishment of his Church. To be convinced hereof, we need but turn our eyes towards Jerusalem, and consider attentively the glorious event which took place there this day, at the very time that the Jews were celebrating the anniversary of the promulgation of their Law on Mount Sinai. This is the interesting subject to which the Church calls our attention at present, and which I will endeavour briefly to lay before you in the following discourse. The wonderful change that the Holy Ghost wrought in the disciples of Christ on the day of Pentecost, and the astonishing success with which he blessed and crowned their labours, shall be the subject of the first point. The means whereby the disciples prepared themselves for receiving the Holy Ghost, and by which we ought likewise to prepare ourselves for receiving his heavenly gifts and graces, shall be the subject of the second point. Intercede for us, O blessed mother of Jesus, that we may be made worthy of the promises of thy beloved Son. For this end, my brethren, let us devoutly recite the angelical salutation, *Ave Maria.*

It is an article of faith, that the Holy Ghost is the third person of the most Holy Trinity; that he proceeds from the Father and the Son as from one source; that he is equal to both in power and glory, and every perfection, existing with the same divine nature and essence from all eternity. As the work of our creation is commonly attributed to the Father, and

the work of our redemption to the Son, so the work of our sanctification is particularly attributed to the Holy Ghost, because he is the love of the Father and of the Son; and it is from God's love that all grace, all sanctification, all virtue flows and proceeds. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, ch. xix. that St. Paul, on his arrival in the City of Ephesus, found certain people there who told him they had not even heard that there was an Holy Ghost. None of you, I suppose, can plead the like ignorance, since, now-a-days, the very children in the streets may readily learn from the mouth of every common curser and swearer, that there is an Holy Ghost. To swear by him, is, alas! become so fashionable and so favourite an oath with many, that we can scarce pass along the public ways, without being almost deafened with the sound of it from every corner. To such a pitch is impiety raised at present, that not only men, but even women, whom modesty should characterize, are not content with blaspheming the *Holy Father*, and tearing the sacred name of *Jesus* to pieces every hour in the day. They have also begun to attack the *Holy Ghost*, and invoke him frequently as a witness to their crimes and abominations; for it is remarkable, that as they have been called to the light of the Gospel, and baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, they have at length found out the secret of blaspheming all the three Divine Persons at once, as if they were resolved nothing should be wanting to secure their damnation. But let us leave such unhappy sinners to the mercy or justice of God, and return to our subject.

It was on the fiftieth day after the resurrection, and the tenth after the ascension of Jesus Christ, that the Holy Ghost descended on the disciples when they were assembled together in the city of Jerusalem on the feast of Pentecost; for, as the feast of the Jewish Pentecost prefigured the Christian Pentecost, and as the tables of the Law were given to Moses on Mount Sinai, the fiftieth day after the children of Israel had been delivered from the bondage of Pharaoh, and had passed the Red Sea on their way to the Land of Promise, it was in like manner, on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Christ, who came to deliver mankind from the bondage of the infernal Pharaoh, and to conduct his children through the Red Sea of his precious blood to the true Land of Promise, that the Holy Ghost was pleased to descend and to promulge the new Law of the Gospel on Mount Sion in Jerusalem, about the ninth hour in the morning on a Sunday, when the Jews were commemorating their ancient Pentecost. There was this difference, however, between the giving of the old Law to Moses and the new Law to the disciples, that the one was engraved in tables of stone, the other was imprinted in the hearts of the faithful; the one was given in the midst of thunder and lightning, the other under the outward appearance and visible form

of fiery tongues; for since the new Law is not a Law of fear and terror, destined for slaves, but a Law of charity and grace, destined for the children of God, it was expedient that it should be imprinted in the minds and written in the hearts of Christians by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of love.

The gates of Heaven were accordingly opened on a sudden, and the riches of God's love and mercy were poured fourth on the disciples of Christ this day, in the greatest abundance. *A noise or sound was formed in the air, says the Scripture, like a violent rushing wind, that filled the whole house where they were sitting, and the Holy Ghost descended visibly upon them in the shape of tongues of fire, to denote the gift of tongues with which he came to endow them, and the fire of charity which he came to enkindle in their hearts.* He descended upon them as a Spirit of light and truth, to instruct and teach them; as a Spirit of grace to sanctify them; as a spirit of charity to qualify them in every respect for the sacred functions of the apostolic ministry. *They were all replenished with the Holy Ghost, says the sacred text, and they began to speak with different tongues.* They were all divinely inspired, all strengthened in their faith, all confirmed and fortified, all enriched with the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; their intellects were enlightened with the knowledge of supernatural truths, their wills were inflamed with the fire of divine love, and all the faculties of their souls were filled with heavenly benedictions.

It was thus that the following prediction of St. John the Baptist was accomplished, *I indeed baptize ye in water, said he, but he who is to come after me shall baptize ye in the Holy Ghost and fire.* It was thus that the merits of Jesus Christ crucified were crowned, and his promises fulfilled to the inexpressible joy of the disciples, and to the great consolation of the faithful, but to the eternal shame and confusion of the incredulous Jews, who were astonished to hear a dozen poor illiterate fishermen by trade, who never had studied the Law, quoting the Scriptures and expounding the divine Oracles, with as much facility as if they were so many inspired Angels that descended from Heaven. Nothing was able to resist the force of their divine eloquence, and the spirit of wisdom that spoke through their mouths. The Scripture informs us, that one of the heavenly Spirits of the angelic order of the Seraphim, purified the lips of the Prophet Isaias with a burning coal taken from the altar; but the Holy Ghost purified the lips of the disciples, and gave them tongues of fire capable of inflaming the frozen hearts of sinners, and melting them into compunction. Before the descent of the Holy Ghost, they were a set of ignorant, weak, dastardly men; they were so timorous and cowardly, that when their Lord and Master was apprehended in the garden, they ran away and abandoned him to the mercy of his merciless enemies, Matt. c. xxvi. v. 56. After his resurrection, though he frequently appeared to them, in order to

raise and cheer up their drooping spirits, yet they were so dull and slow of apprehension, that all his discourses seemed ænigmas or riddles to them. Even after his ascension, they were still under such panics that they had not courage to appear in public, but remained shut up in a house at Jerusalem for fear of the Jews. But, O wonderful change! as soon as the Holy Ghost shed his beams upon them, they issue forth with intrepidity like so many courageous lions, breathing forth flames of charity; they present themselves on a sudden in the streets of Jerusalem, with a design to reform the face of the universe. Nothing but an impulse of the Divine Spirit could animate them to undertake so arduous an enterprise, and nothing but the same Spirit could execute it with instruments so weak and disproportioned in appearance to the greatness of the design. But though weak of themselves, *they were able*, as the Apostle speaks, *to do all things in him who strengthens them*. They are so wonderfully illumined from above, as to be able to penetrate the highest mysteries, to convince the most eloquent orators, and to confound the most learned philosophers. They are so amazingly fortified that they fear no dangers, they apprehend no perils, they dread no torments, they regard no threats or menaces, they despise the cruelties of the most violent persecutions and sufferings; for the sweet name of Jesus become the subject of their joy and of their glory, Acts, c. v. v. 41. They zealously announce the mystery of the cross to every known nation under the Heavens, and the different tribes and people of the earth understand them as if they spoke to them in their own native language.

Peter, the Chief and Head of the Apostolic College, goes immediately to the elders of the Synagogue, to the Scribes and Pharisees, and to the Magistrates of Jerusalem, and boldly reproaches them with having murdered their Lord and Messiah. A little before that, being questioned by the servant-maid of Caiphas the High Priest, he trembled with fear and shamefully denied Christ; but now he values not the whole Sanhedrim of the Jews; he raises his voice with courage in a public assembly, and having commanded them to hearken to his words, he openly professes that the person called Jesus of Nazareth, whom they a few weeks before that had most unjustly executed like a malefactor, is the true son of the living God. He exhorts them to repent and to become adorers of Jesus, after having been his murderers; and blessed for ever be the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, he converts at his two first sermons eight thousand souls to the Lord. The rest of the Apostles were fired with no less zeal; death in its most terrifying shape was not able to deter them from the sacred functions of their ministry; they spread over the globe, each of them like the Angel mentioned in the Apocalypse, flying with his Gospel through the air, as the Spirit guides them. The wandering earth is roused by the thunder of their voices; their words re-

semble so many fiery darts that are shot from hearts inflamed with the love of God ; the most populous and renowned cities of Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, even Rome itself, then the mistress of the world, hear with raptures the eloquence of these illiterate fishermen. The temples of the devils fell to the ground at the sound of their voice, as the walls of Jericho fell to the ground at the sound of the trumpets of Israel. In short, they made such a rapid progress, and preached the Gospel of Jesus with such wonderful success, that *their sound went into the whole earth*, as the Scripture says, *and their words reached the remotest corners of the known world, the Lord espousing the doctrine they preached as his own cause, and confirming it with numberless miracles*, Mark, c. xvi. Thus, my brethren, the Church of Christ was originally planted, and in a few years established upon the ruins of Paganism and the destruction of the Jewish Synagogue. Thus the foundations of our holy religion were first laid, not in the course of the two or three last centuries, but upwards of seventeen hundred years ago, and that not by men of dissolute lives, nor by the force of arms, nor by the severity of sanguinary laws, nor by the allurements of temporal advantages and worldly preferments, but the labours and preaching of Christ's own Apostles, aided and assisted by the Holy Ghost, who descended visibly upon them this day. We are therefore to regard the solemnity of Pentecost as the epoch of the Christian religion, and to celebrate it with spiritual joy as the anniversary of the birth of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church ; that *pillar and ground of truth*, against which the gates of hell never will be able to prevail. But whilst we devoutly contemplate the glorious mystery of this great festival, and gratefully acknowledge the goodness of the Lord our God, in having called us to the pale of his Church and to the admirable light of faith, by the ministry of his twelve Apostles and their lawful successors in office, let us briefly examine how they prepare themselves for receiving the Holy Ghost, that by following their example we may partake, in some degree, of the inestimable blessings that were so plentifully bestowed on them.

Every solemnity should inspire Christians with a devotion proper and suitable to the mystery which they solemnize. Thus the anniversary of our blessed Redeemer's passion and death, should inspire us with a firm resolution to die to sin, and to hate that foul monster which nailed the Son of God to an ignominious cross. The feast of his Resurrection should excite us to rise from the spiritual death of sin to a new life of grace and virtue, truly, really and permanently. The feast of his Ascension should encourage us to disengage our hearts from the inordinate love of earthly things, and to aspire after our heavenly country, where Jesus Christ our head is gone before us, in order to draw our affections after him. The present feast of Pentecost should, in like manner, excite us to have

recourse to the most effectual means that may engage the Holy Ghost to descend into our souls, and take a permanent possession of our hearts; for the coming of this Divine Spirit was not promised to the Apostles and primitive Christians only, but was designed for a blessing to be entailed on the faithful of all ages who are duly disposed to receive him, and who oppose no obstacles to the operations of his divine grace. *I will not leave you orphans*, said our loving Redeemer, *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, or Comforter, that he may abide with ye for ever, the Spirit of truth*, St. John, c. xiv. v. 16, 17. We cannot prepare ourselves better for sharing in his gracious favours and blessings, than by imitating the disciples, who, immediately after the ascension of their Lord and Master, returned from Mount Olivet to the city of Jerusalem, where they assembled in the same place, and disposed themselves for the coming of the Divine Spirit by a spiritual retreat, and by persevering unanimously in prayer and heavenly contemplation. For the space of ten days they withdrew from the distracting noise and tumults of the world, and continued together in the strictest union and the most perfect harmony, constantly blessing and praising God with one heart and one spirit, and inviting the Holy Ghost into their souls by fervent exercises of piety and devotion. Such were their dispositions, and such also should our dispositions be, if we sincerely wish to partake of the precious gifts and graces that Heaven poured forth on them this day.

Before all things, it is necessary to be free from mortal sin; for the Holy Ghost will not come into a soul that Satan possesses by sin, nor dwell in a body that is defiled with impurity; the old leaven must be purged out, and the foul stains of sin must be washed off with the waters of penance, that our souls may become fit abodes and worthy temples of the Spirit of sanctity; our hearts must be cleared of all hatred, malice and ill-will, before the Spirit of charity will take possession of them. The spirit of pride, the spirit of self-love, the spirit of the world must be banished and cast out before the spirit of God will enter in; for light is not more opposite to darkness than the Spirit of God is to the spirit of the world. All dissensions and animosities are to be laid aside, and we must be in peace and harmony with our neighbour; for the spirit of concord and God of peace will not come where the spirit of discord reigns, nor will he descend into an heart that is embittered with rancour or envenomed with the spirit of anger and revenge. All these obstacles being therefore carefully removed, we are, like the disciples, to enter into a kind of spiritual retreat from the distracting cares of the world, and to invite the Holy Ghost into our souls by devout and fervent prayers, especially such prayers as the Angel Raphael recommended to Tobias, I mean *prayers accompanied with fasting and alms-deeds*, these being, as it were, the two wings that raise our petitions up to the Hea-

vens, and make them fly to the very throne of the Almighty. Behold, my brethren, the manner in which you are to prepare yourselves for the reception of the Holy Ghost, at this holy time of Whitsuntide, when the universal Church is unanimously petitioning the throne of mercy by a solemn fast and by public prayers, which she offers up all over the world during the ensuing octave, for the descent of the Divine Spirit upon all her Pastors, her Clergy, and their respective flocks. It is true, the Holy Ghost does not at present descend visibly on the faithful in the figure of fiery tongues, nor always bestow on them the extraordinary and miraculous gifts which he conferred on the Apostles, these being now no longer necessary as they were in the infancy and at the first establishment of the Church; however, he still continues to this very day to descend really, though invisibly, into the souls of those who give themselves up to his divine influences, and are properly disposed, like the disciples, for receiving the impressions of his grace. He is an inexhaustible fountain of goodness that flows incessantly, and will continue to flow every day unto the end of the world, till the number of the elect is completed. He is so rich in mercy, that his heavenly favours and blessings are neither confined to any time, nor limited to any place. It is the Holy Ghost who infuses a spiritual life into us at our baptism, and animates our souls as our souls animate our bodies. It is the Holy Ghost who produces in the just the life of faith, sentiments of hope, works of charity, and all the happy fruits that are mentioned by St. Paul, Galat. c. v. v. 22, 23. It is the Holy Ghost who *diffuses the love of God in our hearts*, Rom. c. v. v. 5. He sweetens our crosses and sufferings, gives us strength and vigour to discharge every Christian duty, and distributes his various gifts to the different members of the Church, *according to the measure of the donation of Christ*, as the Apostle speaks, Ephes. c. iv. v. 7. Hence St. Augustine concludes and says that every day in the year may be a Pentecost for Christians, if they please, since they have it in their power to receive the Holy Ghost every day, by being well disposed and duly prepared to co-operate with his grace. If therefore, my brethren, any of you have been so blind to your own eternal welfare, as to *resist the Holy Ghost* like the stiff-necked Jews; if ye have been so unfortunate as to *contristate and extinguish* the Divine Spirit, or to banish this heavenly guest from the temple of your souls by giving admittance to mortal sin, let me entreat you in the name of God to hearken to these Apostolic words, and practice this salutary advice, by which Saint Peter converted no less than three thousand souls at one sermon on this festival: *Do penance and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*. O all-powerful Spirit! O burning furnace of divine love! O inexhaustible Source and Giver of all good gifts! O sweet comforter of all distressed souls! remove from us all obstacles to thy grace, and dis-

pose us for receiving thy sacred influences. Descend, we beseech thee, on thy faithful servants assembled here this day in thy name; come into our hearts and take full possession of them; enter into our souls and abide in them for ever, here by thy grace and hereafter by thy glory. Be thou our guide, our light and our strength; fortify the feeble, comfort the afflicted, animate the fearful, inspire the lukewarm with fervour, excite the languid to a feeling sense of their duty. Mollify the stony hearts of sinners, and bring back the strayed sheep to the narrow path of salvation. Quench the fire of our passions, heal our spiritual disorders, and consume in us the rust of all inordinate affections. Preserve us from ever splitting on the rock of presumption or despair, and grant us the great gift of final perseverance that after partaking of thy grace in this life we may partake of thy felicity in the next. Which my brethren, I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

TRINITY SUNDAY.

On the Sacrament of Baptism.

Euntes ergo docete omnes Gentes, baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.—*S. Mat. c. xxviii. v. 19.*

Going therefore teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—Mat. c. xxviii. v. 19.

IN these words, which the Saviour of the world pronounced in his last discourse to his Apostles, we find included the summary of our faith, the basis of our religion, the character of our profession, and the most august of all our mysteries; and these words alone suffice to confound the Arians, Socinians, and all other ancient and modern unbelievers, who deny the unity of God in three distinct persons. St. John asserts the same truth, 1 Ep. c. v. 7. where he expressly says, *There are three that give testimony in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* It is this faith that justifies sinners, sanctifies the just, baptizes the catechumens, fortifies and confirms the Christians, crowns the martyrs, consecrates the ministers of the altar, and saves the universal world. Hence the first lesson we learn in the school of Christianity, is, that there is one God and three persons, equal in

wisdom, power and glory. No sooner has a child obtained the faculty of speaking, but he is taught to bless himself in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. It is by these sacred names of the adorable Trinity that every exorcism, consecration and benediction is performed, all our sacrifices and prayers are offered, every good action is begun and ended, and our souls are sent forth at the awful hour of death and recommended to the divine mercy, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to denote that there is no grace, no justification, no salvation, but by the faith of Trinity. Without the belief of it we cannot understand the incarnation of the Son of God, or the mystery of our redemption; nor was it possible for us to have the least idea of it if God had not vouchsafed to reveal it, it being impenetrable, unsearchable, incomprehensible, and infinitely above the reach of all human reason, though it is not against reason to believe it, since nothing can be more conformable to right reason than to believe most firmly what God has revealed, though reason be not able to comprehend or clearly understand it. It is indeed evident to reason itself, that there is only one God. and that there can be no more, two beings absolutely infinite and two universal sources of perfection, implying a contradiction, which made St. Athanasius say, that *polytheism, or a plurality of Gods, is atheism or a nullity of Gods*; for two free all-powerful beings are incompatible and destroy each other, since the power of one could be restrained and his counsels discovered by the other. The very uniform design of the universe shews, that there is but one only Author and Sovereign Ruler of all things; none but the fool can deny it, as the Scripture says. We need but open our eyes to be convinced of the existence of this Supreme Being; the Heavens publish his glory, the sun announces his Majesty, the stars proclaim his magnificence, and the whole universe discovers his infinite power, wisdom and providence. But the mystery of the Trinity is infinitely beyond the reach of every creature, and surpasses the capacity of all human understanding; the most subtle philosophers, and the brightest wits, after all their study and search of natural causes and effects for so many ages, could never attain to it; nay, if you except some of the holy Patriarchs and Prophets, to whom it seems to have been notified by a special revelation, the Israelites and Jews, who were God's own chosen people, seem to have been stranger's to this sublime mystery. An explicit and distinct knowledge and belief of it was reserved for the children of the new Testament. With what awful respect ought we then to celebrate this day's solemnity, which is dedicated to the ever-blessed Trinity? How gratefully ought we to acknowledge the infinite goodness and mercy of the Lord, in calling us to this admirable light of faith and enrolling us among his true worshippers? Such unlimited bounty should excite us this day to

consecrate afresh the three powers of our souls, our memory, understanding and will, to the Three Persons of the most Holy Trinity, and never to cease paying them an unfeigned homage of praise, love and adoration, but to refer our whole being, our life and all our actions to the honour and glory of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, as the Saints and Angels do in Heaven for all eternity. This is what we solemnly promised at the sacred font, when we were spiritually born in the Church, and baptized in the name of the most Holy Trinity. To animate you, therefore, to a faithful correspondence with these important duties, permit me to lay before you the signal grace and mercy bestowed on you at your baptism, and the weighty obligations which you have thereby contracted. Let us first implore the light of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, &c. *Ave Maria.*

St. Paul, speaking of the Sacrament of Baptism, Ephes. c. v. v. 25, 26, says, that *Christ loved his Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life*; and again, Tit. c. iii. v. 5. *He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost.* This is the sovereign remedy which his infinite goodness established for the remission of original sin, wherein we were all born. By virtue of it we are re-born and receive a new life in Jesus Christ; our souls are raised from a state of spiritual death and restored to the life of grace, and it is for this reason that baptism is called a sacrament of the dead. It is allowed to be a sacrament of the new Law, even by those who have rejected most of the other sacraments. Its necessity may be proved from the words of Christ to his Apostles, when he commissioned them to teach and baptize all nations; for he immediately adds, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned*; in which words he requires that all nations should believe the truths taught by the Apostles, and consequently be baptized, promising salvation, not to faith alone, but to faith and baptism together, which shews the necessity of the one as well as of the other. The necessity of baptism also appears evidently from St. John, c. ii. v. 5. where our Saviour expressly says, that *unless a man be re-born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; from whence it follows clearly, that as no man can enter into this world, or enjoy a corporal life, except he be born of his carnal parents, so, no one can enter into Heaven, or attain to life everlasting, unless he be regenerated or gets a second birth in Jesus Christ, by being baptized with the external element of water and the internal virtue of the Holy Ghost; for where actual baptism of water cannot be had, it must, at least be in desire, there being but two cases in which the want of this sacrament may be supplied; the first is martyrdom, otherwise called *Baptism of Blood*; the second is *Baptism of Spirit*; or *Baptism of the Holy Ghost*, that is, an ardent desire

of receiving the Sacrament of Baptism with a perfect repentance. Baptism was prefigured in the old Law by the Sacrament of Circumcision, by the Ark of Noah at the time of the deluge, whereby the world was purged; by the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, and their deliverance from the bondage of Pharaoh; by the washing of Naaman the Syrian in the River of Jordan; by the Probatica of Jerusalem and by the baptism of St. John the Baptist.

The necessity and obligation of receiving this sacrament, commenced in general after our Saviour's ascension, when the Gospel was sufficiently promulged; it was then the Apostles began publicly to execute the commission given to them by their Divine Master to teach all nations, and to administer baptism in water, without exception to all persons both young and old that were converted to Christianity, even to such as had received the Holy Ghost, and consequently who had been already baptized by the Spirit, as we read in Acts, ch. ii. viii, ix. x. xvi. and xxii. Did we but seriously consider the gift of God, and the special favour he conferred on us by calling us thus to the light of his Gospel and the pale of his Church, by the labours of his Apostles and their successors, we would be convinced that we can never return him sufficient thanks for his mercy; it is so great a benefit, so signal a grace, that it calls loudly upon us for the most grateful acknowledgment and the most faithful correspondence on our part. Whilst thousands of others are left perishing in idolatry, and in their native misery, whilst they are out of the pale of the Church and excluded from the communion of saints; whilst they are seduced by error, blinded by infidelity, and, as the Scripture expresses it, sitting in darkness and the gloomy shades of death; whilst they are tossed to and fro by every blast of false doctrine, and wandering away from the paths of salvation, the Lord in his infinite mercy has vouchsafed to call us to the true saving faith, and to place us in the bosom of his Church by the regenerative grace of our baptism. By means of this grace we have been made Christians and children of God, and heirs of everlasting life. By nature we have been conceived in iniquity, and born children of wrath and slaves of Satan, liable to eternal misery; but by the grace of baptism, we have been re-born the adoptive children of the eternal Father, the brothers and co-heirs of Jesus Christ, and the living temples of the Holy Ghost; we have been rescued from the jaws of the infernal dragon, delivered from the bondage of sin, sanctified and consecrated by the sprinkling of the precious blood of our Blessed Redeemer. In short, we have been sealed with the unction of the Divine Spirit, raised to a royal dignity and priesthood, as St. Peter speaks, 1 Ep. c. ii. v. 9. and advanced to the participation of the divine nature, when the character of a Christian was stamped on us and imprinted in our souls at our receiving baptism in the name of the Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. To denote these singular graces, advantages and prerogatives of baptism, the three persons of the most Holy Trinity appeared at the time our Saviour was baptized by St. John in the river Jordan; the Father by the voice that was heard, saying, *This is my beloved Son*; the Son under the form of man, and the Holy Ghost under the form of a dove; the Heavens at the same time opening to give us to understand, that Baptism not only constitutes us the adoptive Sons of God, and restores to us the innocence of a dove, but also opens the gates of Heaven for us and gives us an unquestionable right and title to the enjoyment of eternal glory.

The character of a Christian is, of course, a character of holiness; a character of such honour, eminence and dignity, that, as St. Augustine says, l. 5. de civ. c. 10. the Emperor Theodosius justly looked upon all the honours, dignities, and pompous titles of the world, as nothing in-comparison of it. It is so noble a character that St. Lewis King of France, preferred the honour of being a Christian to that of being monarch of one of the most flourishing kingdoms of the earth; for which reason he always paid more attention and regard to the title, which he took from the place of his baptism, than to that which he derived from the place of his coronation. The character of baptism is, in fine, a permanent and indelible character, that does not vanish or forsake a person at the hour of death, but follows him to the tribunal of God, and remains like a spiritual mark or seal imprinted in his soul for all eternity, either for his greater glory in Heaven, if he lives up to it here on earth, or for his greater confusion in hell, in case his life be not answerable to its dignity, or does not correspond to the weighty obligations and duties that are thereto annexed.

And really, as the dignity of a Christian and child of God is so very eminent, the obligations that attend this dignity are great in proportion, and require that we should demean ourselves in a manner becoming so exalted a rank, and worthy of so noble a character. The renowned St. Basil says, that whoever has received the baptism of the law of grace, has obliged himself by an irrevocable and indispensable contract to imitate Jesus Christ, to copy after the virtues of his most holy life, and to endeavour to resemble him as an image resembles its original. This is our duty in quality of Christians and disciples of Christ. *We are to see and do according to the example he has set before our eyes*; as the Scripture says, Exod. 25. *We are to be clothed with Jesus Christ*, as St. Paul speaks, 3 Galat. We are to learn from him to be meek and humble of heart; we are to take up our Cross and follow him; we are to bear a resemblance of his mortification in our mortal bodies; for as he is our Head, we his members; he our Pastor, we his flock; he our Pontiff, we his Church; he our Divine Master and Legislator, we his people, his conquest, and the price of

his blood ; if there be no likeness or resemblance of him in us, though we should otherwise have all the perfections of Angels, God will not acknowledge nor count us in the number of his elect, since, according to St. Paul, *those who are predestinated by him must be conformable to the image of his Son* ; they must walk in his footsteps by an imitation of his virtues, and an inviolable observance of his laws ; they must renounce their own will, and seek to do in all things the will of God ; they must curb and correct their passions and natural inclinations by self-denial and mortification, if they mean to support the glorious character and dignity of disciples of Jesus Christ ; for, as the Apostle teaches, Galat. c. v. v. 24. *They who are of Christ have crucified their flesh with their vices and concupiscences* ; from whence it follows, that such as do not comply with these necessary duties are excluded from the number of his disciples, and, of course, from the participation of his glory. This is what made Tertullian call a Christian, who lives up to his character, a man crucified and dead to the pomps of the world and the deeds of the flesh ; that is, to his own corrupt inclinations and passions. Wherefore, to be a Christian it is not sufficient to believe in Jesus Christ, and make outward profession of his doctrine, but it is likewise necessary to observe his law and avoid every thing that it forbids, and omit nothing it commands ; for as every one who formerly received Circumcision incurred thereby a strict obligation to fulfil all the precepts of the Jewish law, Gal. v. 3. so in like manner every one that is regenerated in the laver of Baptism is bound to keep all the commandments and precepts of the Gospel, to serve God in spirit and truth, and to edify his neighbour by the good odour of Christian virtues and an innocent life. Hence, when our Saviour said to his Apostles, *go, and baptize all nations, &c.* he immediately added, *teach them to observe whatever I commanded you* ; to give us to understand that we must square our actions according to his law, join obedience to the purity of our belief, and honour our faith by the holiness of our lives.

It is to inculcate these obligations, as well as to represent the graces and wonderful effects of Baptism, that the Church, ever since the earliest years of Christianity, has made use of so many sacred ceremonies in the solemn administration of this Sacrament. Among the rest, in former ages the newly baptized were clothed in white garments for the space of eight days, during which time they appeared daily in the Church with a Crown or Garland on their heads, and a burning light in their hands. According to the modern discipline, the heads of such as are baptized are covered with a white linen cloth, and a lighted taper is put into their hands ; the one to denote the innocence and purity required in a Christian, the other to signify the fire of charity with which his heart ought to be always inflamed, and the light of faith and good example

whereby he ought to shine in the Church of God. that, like unto the five prudent virgins in the Gospel, he may always be in readiness to go and meet Jesus Christ, the Divine Bridegroom, to whom his soul was espoused at Baptism, and to answer his call at whatsoever hour he shall invite him to the nuptials of his Heavenly Kingdom. Hence it is that the baptizing Priest says to the baptized Christian, *Receive this white garment, which mayest thou carry unstained before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life, Amen*; and again, *receive this burning light, and keep thy Baptism without reproof; observe the commandments of God, that when our Lord shall come to his nuptials thou mayest meet him, together with all the saints, in the heavenly court, and mayest have life eternal. Amen.*

As for the solemn renunciation of Satan, and of his works, and of his pomps, which is then made, it deserves our particular attention; for it is a vow and promise made in the face of the Church; and in the presence of God and his angels; it is an indissoluble contract and alliance, whereby we have engaged ourselves to abandon the party of the devil, to have nothing to do with his works, that is with the works of darkness and sin, and to cast away from us his pomps, that is, the maxims, modes and vanities of the world. It is, according to the Roman Catechism, p. 1. a. 2. n. 20, an holy and solemn profession, by which we have devoted ourselves to the service of the Blessed Trinity, as a religious man devotes himself to the service of God, by entering into a religious order, or as a Priest devotes himself to the service of the altar by receiving ordination. It is, in fine, a covenant or spiritual wedding like that of a bride with her bridegroom, contracted with God, in virtue of which we on our part swear allegiance to him, promise never to abandon his cause, renounce his faith, or deny his religion, but to combat vigorously under the banner of the Cross against the most dangerous enemies of our souls, the devil, the world and the flesh; to make always a steady and sincere profession of the great truths of Christianity, not by words only, but by the constant practice of good works; and God, on his part, promises us life everlasting if we prove faithful to our engagements, and preserve the white robe of our baptismal innocence pure and undefiled to the hour of death.

These engagements and vows we are bound to ratify and fulfil, when we come to the use of reason, as the Council of Trent teaches, Sess. 7. because they were made by our god-fathers and god-mothers, in our name, at the baptismal Font. The holy Fathers and other spiritual writers advise all Christians to renew their baptismal vows every year on the anniversary of their Baptism, and also on the grand solemnities of Easter and Whitsuntide, and on the feast of the most Holy Trinity. St. Gregory Nazianzen, Orat. 39. informs us that the

Greek Church celebrates a particular festival for this purpose, which they call the holy feast of lights. St. Bernard, Conc. 1 de dedic. Eccl. says, that we ought to look upon the feast of the dedication of the Church, as a day appointed for returning thanks every year to the Lord for the benefit of our vocation to Christianity, and for having consecrated the temples of our souls by the grace of Baptism. St. Charles Borromeus, Conc. 6. says, that the faithful ought to be admonished to pay unto the Lord an annual tribute of praise and thanksgiving on the anniversary of their baptism, and to spend that day in works of piety and devotion, such as renewing their baptismal engagements, meditating on the goodness of God in having brought them to this great Sacrament, reflecting seriously on the weighty obligations they have thereby contracted, and fervently imploring grace to fulfil them. And really if the Israelites were ordered by Moses, Exod. xiii. to keep a solemn feast every year in perpetual memory and thanksgiving, for the benefit of their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage, and their miraculous passage through the Red Sea, how much more reason have we to celebrate, in a particular manner, the anniversary of our baptism every returning year in grateful remembrance of the signal mercies of our God, who on that day vouchsafed to deliver us from the bondage of sin, to wash and purify us in the blood of the immaculate Lamb, Jesus Christ, and to exalt us to the eminent dignity of his adoptive children?

Wo, nay double wo to us, if after having received so many signal favours and blessings from Heaven, we shamefully degenerate from the character and dignity of Christians, and perfidiously violate the promises we have made! It were better for us never to have been regenerated in the waters of baptism, never to have borne the glorious title of Christians, *never to have known the way of justice*, as St. Peter speaks, 2 Ep. c. ii. v. 21. *than after the knowledge to turn back again*, to strike a league with hell and dissolve the covenant we made with God. Alas! the manifold graces we have received will only serve to render us the more accountable to the Divine Justice, if we receive them in vain. They are so many funds of obligations, so many talents entrusted to us, and for which we shall be called to a more strict account, if, instead of improving them to the honour of God, the edification of our neighbour, and the advantage of our own souls, we abuse them to the dishonour and scandal of the Christian name. The very faith we profess, will serve for our greater confusion, and be the rule of our condemnation, if we do not conform our conduct to it. The white robe with which we were clothed at our baptism, will appear against us at the last day, and reproach us with our infidelity; nay, as the Holy Fathers speak, it will be dipped in a pool of fire and brimstone, and contribute to increase the torments of wicked Christians and Catho-

lics in hell's devouring flames. The crimes they commit will be deemed more grievous and more deserving of punishment, on account of the base ingratitude, contempt, treachery, and perfidiousness which they imply. Their baptismal vows, their own consciences, the Priest who baptized them, the Angels who were witnesses, will bear testimony and demand vengeance for the abuses and profanations of their baptism; nay, as the Gospel says, the very Ninivites and other infidels will then rise up in judgment against them, and convict them of perjury and apostacy. The numerous tribes of barbarians who are deprived of the grace of baptism, and have not the happiness to know God, may plead some excuse and expect some mitigation in their punishment; but *the servant who knows the will of his master, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* The Christian who is enlightened with the light of faith, and does not live up to his profession, *but confessing God with his mouth denies him by his actions,* will have nothing to say in his own defence, but will be liable to a far greater punishment than either Jews or Heathens; for, as the holy character of priesthood aggravates the guilt of a Priest, if he dishonours it by the irregularity of his life and the corruption of his morals, so in like manner, the holy character of baptism, profaned and dishonoured by a wicked life, renders a Christian more criminal, and will cover those at the last day with everlasting shame and confusion, who, after being washed in the blood of Jesus, after being made members of his mystical body, and after being favoured with so many means and opportunities to work their salvation, have ungratefully trampled under foot the most sacred laws of God and his Church, and re-plunged themselves into the bondage of Satan. Grant, O merciful Jesus, that we may conform our lives to the sanctity of our state, and model our actions upon the laws of thy Gospel. If hitherto we have sinned against Heaven and earth, and rendered ourselves unworthy to be called thy children; if unhappily we have made a shipwreck of our baptismal innocence and violated our vows, we return to thy mercy in the bitterness of our souls, and most humbly beseech thee to pardon us what is past, and preserve us from future relapses. O most holy and undivided Trinity, we adore and glorify thee for having called us to the wonderful light of faith, and incorporated us by the grace of our baptism in the pale and bosom of thy Church. Give us grace to become worthy members of so illustrious a body, that we may edify our neighbour and promote thy honour and glory by the sanctity of our lives and by the purity of our morals, until we have the happiness to see and enjoy thee in the kingdom of thy glory. Which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Necessity and Signal Advantages of Alms and Works of Mercy.

Estote misericordes, sicut et Pater vester misericors est.—*Luc. c. vi. v. 36.*

Be you merciful, as your Father is merciful.—*St. Luke, c. vi. v. 36.*

HEAVEN and earth, and all the wondrous works of the universe, proclaim the existence of an all-wise Providence which presides over all things, preserves regularity and perfect order in all things and extends its attention and care to every part of the creation, even to the birds of the air, to the fish of the sea, to the beasts of the field, and to the very least and the most minute insects. By Providence I mean the eternal will, infinite wisdom, power and goodness of God, by which he directs, governs and supports all his creatures according to his own wise purposes, and conducts them to their term or last end by such means as he knows to be the best adapted and the most suitable thereto. It is our indispensable duty to adore, obey and second the views and designs of his Divine Providence, with an unlimited dependence and submission. Whether he thinks proper to place us in a high or in a low station of life, in health or in sickness, in prosperity or in adversity, in affluence or in poverty, we are to rest satisfied with our condition, to bow down and conform to his holy will, to receive all things as coming from his blessed hands, and to be firmly persuaded that he orders all things sweetly and for our real benefit and greater advantage; for, as the Royal Prophet says, *Ps. cxliv. v. 9. The Lord is sweet to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*; and again, *Psalm cii. As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him.* The grand end and view of God's Providence in the dispensation of the goods of this world to mankind, being the eternal salvation of their souls, it appertained to his wisdom, to establish a variety of states and conditions, and to place some in a more exalted station, others in a more humble; some at the head of the community, others at the feet; some in the possession of riches, others under the pressures of indigence; that by assisting each other, and fulfilling the different duties and functions of their respective states, they might all attain

the great and happy end for which they have been sent into the world. If there was a perfect equality in the states and conditions of men, if all were upon the same level and footing, who would take upon themselves the painful but necessary tasks of life? If all were masters, who would serve them? If all were servants, who would employ them? If all were poor, who would supply their wants? If all were equally rich and at their ease, who would work for them? Who would apply to hard labour and useful industry? Who would till and cultivate the earth in the sweat of their brow?

In the beginning, indeed, God made all things common, and commanded the earth to bring forth its fruits spontaneously, that every one might partake of them according to his necessity; but in process of time, sin and the corruption of man's heart rendered it necessary to make a division of earthly goods into unequal shares, and to consign a larger portion of them to some, and a smaller share to others. By this wise arrangement peace and subordination are preserved in human society, anarchy and confusion are prevented, daily labour and honest industry are promoted and rewarded. The rich and the laborious are rendered mutually dependant, and this mutual dependence serves as a link to form a closer union between them, and to engage them to be useful and serviceable to each other like members of the same body.

But what means of subsistence has Divine Providence ordained for the distressed poor who are past their labour, incapable of applying to honest industry, and who have neither health nor strength to earn their daily bread in the sweat of their brow? Have they any reason to murmur against Heaven or to complain of the economy of Providence, as if they were forgotten in the distribution of its gifts? No, my brethren, the Father of Mercies has not abandoned or forgotten them, though for his own wise reasons he has not judged it expedient to deposit in their hands the perishable riches of this transitory life, which are generally abused and made instrumental to sin. If he leaves them in a state of poverty, it is that they may have an opportunity to atone for their sins, to sanctify their souls, to secure their salvation, and to merit everlasting happiness by their patience, humility and resignation. In the interim, he has taken care to provide sufficiently for their corporal necessities, by giving them a just right and title to have their wants supplied out of the abundance of the rich; for he has appointed the rich to be the trustees, stewards, and co-operators of his Providence, and has absolutely commanded them, as Sovereign Lord and Master of all they possess, to relieve the distressed poor by alms-deeds according to their respective abilities and wants. To convince you of these important truths, and to induce you to a faithful and cheerful compliance with so essential a duty, is the design of the following discourse. The strict obligation and indispensable necessity of giving alms

shall be the subject of the first point. The great utility and signal advantages that accrue from giving alms, particularly towards the clothing, supporting and educating poor little orphans and helpless children, shall be the second point, and the subject of your favourable attention. Let us previously implore the light of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, &c. *Ave Maria*.

Since an unequal division of the goods of this life has necessarily taken place in the world, the earth is no longer common to men, as the sea is to the fish, the air is to the birds, and the forests are to the quadrupedes. The peace of society and the good order of civil government require, that each individual should be secured in the quiet and undisturbed possession of the portion of worldly substance which he lawfully acquires, or which naturally devolves to him by inheritance. With regard to other men, he is therefore to be considered as the just proprietor and the full master of what he thus possesses; but with regard to Almighty God, he is no more than a steward and dispenser, and of course he is obliged to make such use of what is deposited in his hands, as God, the Sovereign Lord and Master of all things, wills and commands. The more he has received from the Giver of all good gifts, the stricter account he will be called to on the last day, if he misapplies the talents committed to him to be improved, or wastes and lavishes in extravagancies what Providence was pleased to entrust to his care for the relief and support of his poor fellow-creatures, who are equally children of the same heavenly Father, and destined to be partakers of the same heavenly glory hereafter. In effect, my brethren, nothing is more inconsistent with the great principles of equity and justice, which the author of nature has implanted in the very fund of our being, and stamped on every rational soul, than to squander the blessings of Heaven in supporting pride and gratifying the inordinate cravings of self love, whilst the poor are actually sinking under the heaviest pressures of want and indigence, and exposed to all the rigours of hunger and thirst, of nakedness and cold. If we consult our own natural reason, it will tell us that men living together in community and assembled in society, should do unto others what they would reasonably wish to have done to themselves, and consequently, that they should not suffer those of their own species to languish in extreme poverty, and perish for want of the common necessities of life, whilst they themselves wallow in riches and live in every kind of luxury; but that on the contrary, they are bound by the law of nature to relieve their neighbour under his grievances according to their ability, as they would wish to be relieved themselves were they in a similar situation. This is a principle which no one contradicts. The Scythian, the Barbarian, the Jew and the Gentile, agree herein with the Christian. This is a duty that nature, that humanity, that instinct, that reason inspires and dictates. But

as the voice of nature and the light of reason are not always attended to, the Almighty has been pleased to inculcate this duty in the clearest and strongest terms both in the Old and New Testament, and to give the rich to understand, that they are not at liberty to hoard up their riches avariciously in their coffers, or to make such use as they please of their superfluities, but that they are to consider them as the gifts and talents of a wise and benign Providence, which in bestowing such plenty and abundance on them, and confining others within such narrow circumstances, proposed to itself an end worthy of itself, and intended that the *superfluities of the rich should be the patrimony of the poor*, as St. Augustine observes. Hence the Scripture calls the alms given to the poor a debt, and the refusal of it a defrauding the poor. *Son*, says the Lord, Eccles. c. iv. v. 1, 8, *defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy face from them; bow down thy ear cheerfully to them, and pay what thou owest.* And again, Deut. c. xv. v. 11. *I command thee to open thy hand to thy poor and needy brother, who dwelleth in the land;* and again, v. 7, *thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor close thy hand, but thou shalt open it to the poor man;* and again, Eccles. xxix. *Help the poor because of the commandment, and send him not away empty-handed because of his poverty;* and again, Isai. c. lviii. v. 7, *break thy bread to the needy, bring the poor and harbourless into thy house; when thou seest one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh.*

All this plainly shews, that the poor have acquired from God a just right and title to be supplied with the necessities of life out of the abundance of the rich, and that to give alms to them in order to solace their wants, is not a simple counsel, nor a mere work of supererogation, but an indispensable duty, and a formal precept of the Sovereign Lord and Master of the universe, who has appointed the rich his agents and economists, and has placed them, like Joseph, over the treasures of Egypt, for the purpose of supplying the wants of his people, and succouring them in the hour of distress. To neglect the poor, therefore, in their distresses, or to withhold and refuse them what has been thus given and appropriated for their relief, is to oppose the ordinance of Heaven, and to counteract the designs of Divine Providence. It is to commit an act of injustice in the sight of God, similar to that of the unjust steward in the Gospel, who embezzled what the master of the family had entrusted to his care for the use and support of the domestics and lower servants of the house. It is also an open breach of charity in both its branches; for, as the Scripture says, *He who has the substance of this world, and sees his brother in necessity, and shuts his bowels against him, how does the love of God remain in him?* St. John, c. iii. v. 17. What is more, he is guilty of a breach of the fifth commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*, when through his neglect his neighbour dies for want: which made St. Ambrose say, *Si non pervisti, occidisti*: Feed

those who are famishing with hunger. If thou hast not fed them, thou hast killed them; thou art guilty in the sight of God of as many murders as there are poor in extreme necessity, who perish with hunger in the place where thou livest, when thou hast it in thy power and thou dost not relieve them.

Hence it is that the uncharitable Priest and Levite are so justly condemned in the Gospel, for passing by and taking no notice of the poor man that lay on the road of Jericho, weltering in his gore, and half dead of the wounds he had received from a set of robbers. Hence it is also that the rich man mentioned in St. Luke, c. xvi. was condemned to eternal misery for refusing the crumbs that fell from his table to poor Lazarus, who sat at his gate covered with ulcers and famishing with hunger. The rich man was clothed in purple and silk, as the sacred text tells us; he feasted sumptuously every day, and when he died he was buried in hell, and plunged into devouring flames, where all the treasures he had formerly possessed on earth were insufficient to purchase a single drop of cold water for him to cool his burning tongue, or mitigate in the least degree, the excruciating torments to which he was sentenced by a just judgment of God, because in his life-time he had been insensible to the cries of the poor, and had misapplied in all kind of vanity and dissipation, what he ought to have laid out in doing works of mercy. His misfortune should serve as a lesson and a warning to those unfeeling and hard-hearted mortals, who resist all the tender sentiments that nature, humanity and religion inspire, and who, far from alleviating the sufferings of their fellow creatures by works of mercy, let them pine away at their doors in the neighbouring cellars and garrets, for want of necessary food and raiment. They will stop at no expense to gratify their own favourite passions, and to indulge their appetite in unnecessary delicacies, but refuse to afford the least comfort or relief to a distressed neighbour, perishing on a bed of sorrow under the anguish of an ulcerous and disordered body, shielded only against the inclemency of the weather by the scanty covering of a tattered garment. They can find money enough to spend in gaming and drinking, in play-houses and idle company, in high living, fine clothes, and expensive diversions; but, if you take their own word for it, they have nothing to spare for charitable purposes and works of mercy to the poor.

O, let me entreat Christians of this description, if any such happen to be here present, to remember that the day will come when they shall be called to a strict account of their stewardship, and that the measure of their alms now to the poor, shall then be the measure of God's mercy to them. *Judgment without mercy shall then be dealt out to him, who hath not done mercy,* says St. James, c. ii. v. 13. The tears of disconsolate widows, the cries of helpless orphans, the sighs and lamentations of numbers of piteous objects, will then rise up against the uncha-

ritable, and draw down the divine vengeance, on their criminal heads. In vain shall they cry out then for mercy; for, as the Holy Ghost says, Proverb. c. xxi. v. 13. *He that stops his ears against the cries of the poor, shall also cry himself and shall not be heard.* The Sovereign Judge will then shut the bowels of infinite mercy against the unmerciful; he will be deaf to their entreaties and turn away his face from them, as they now turn away their faces from the poor, and shut their ears against their moving petitions; he will then pass sentence of reprobation on them, because they have neglected to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, in short, because they have refused to assist him in the persons of his poor brethren and distressed members here on earth, as appears from St. Matt. c. xxv. v. 41. where we read, that the Saviour of the world looks upon what is done or refused to the poor, as done or refused to himself in person, and that the sentence of eternal happiness, or eternal misery, shall be pronounced on the last day, according as we have or have not performed deeds of charity and works of mercy. Before I proceed, permit me to address a few words of comfort and instruction to the suffering and distressed poor, who, like Lazarus, labour under the difficulties of life. As the unhappy fate of the rich glutton should alarm the great ones of the world, who enjoy all the comforts of this life, so on the other hand, the happy end of poor Lazarus, who when he died was carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom, is sufficient to afford consolation to ye, my poor brethren, and should animate ye to endure with patience and resignation, all the trials and hardships to which your humble station subjects ye. Ye should guard against murmuring and repining at your condition, during the short term ye are to remain in this place of pilgrimage and vale of tears. Your Divine Redeemer has consecrated your state of poverty by his own example, and he expressly says in the Gospel, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.* He will in his own good time dry up your tears, and change your sorrow into inexpressible joy. If ye do but keep up to the rules of a Christian life, and refrain from the vices of filching and stealing, cursing and swearing, to which the lower orders of people are peculiarly addicted, the God of mercy will one day translate your souls as he did poor Lazarus, to the sacred mansions of everlasting bliss. In the interim you may rest assured, that the condition of the rich is not so much to be envied as some may, perhaps imagine; it is attended with so many dangers, difficulties, temptations and weighty obligations, that the Gospel declares it to be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Let us now briefly consider the great utility and signal advantages of alms-deeds. It is what I promised to shew you in the second point.

As it is the indispensable duty, so it is the great interest of the rich and affluent, to be charitable and merciful to the poor

and distressed; they are the greatest gainers thereby themselves; they receive more than they give; of a duty they make a merit; and by paying a debt they accumulate a treasure, which moths cannot destroy and which thieves are not able to steal away. Hence the Scripture says, Prov. c. xiv. *He that sheweth mercy to the poor shall be blessed*; and again, ch. xix. *Whatever is given to the poor is lent to the Lord*. It is a little capital, put out at the highest interest, to bring in a profit that vastly surpasses the principal; it is a small grain of seed that is sown in a fertile soil, and produces hundred-fold fruit; for such is the bounty of the Lord, that, as St. Augustine observes, he never suffers himself to be outdone by us in acts of liberality, but holding himself indebted to us for the smallest act of charity we do for his sake, though it should be as trifling as the widow's mite, or of no more value in itself than a cup of cold water, he requites it with a most ample reward. Give to the poor, says our Blessed Saviour, Mat. c. xix. v. 21, *and thou shalt have a treasure in Heaven*. The salutary effects of alms-giving appear visibly in the charitable Dorcas, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, c. ix. who, on account of her having clothed some poor widows, deserved to be miraculously raised to life by St. Peter the Apostle, and in Cornelius the Centurion, who was favoured with the apparition of an Angel and enlightened with the gift of faith, and mercifully called by a special grace to the pale of the true Church, because the alms given by him to the poor had ascended to Heaven like a sweet incense in the sight of the Lord; the example of the widow of Sarephta, who shared her measure of oil and pot of meal with the prophet Elias in his distress, and who was therefore not only blessed with plenty of provision for herself and her family, but also had the comfort to see her dead child restored to life, shews plainly that alms-deeds draw down temporal as well as spiritual blessings on the charitable donors in this life, and cause their worldly substance to encrease and multiply. They are very effectual means to avert the wrath of Heaven, to disarm the justice of God, and to expiate and redeem sins, as the Prophet Daniel told Nabuchodonosor, and as our Blessed Saviour himself gave the Pharisees to understand in St. Luke, c. xi. They contributed wonderfully to move the God of mercy to hear the prayers to which otherwise he would be deaf; to accept the sacrifices, which otherwise he would despise; to be mollified by the tears, which otherwise he would reject, and to grant the grace of a true conversion to sinners, and the precious gift of final perseverance to the just; so that in whatever state a person may happen to be, whether in the happy state of grace, or in the dismal state of mortal sin, if he be merciful to the poor he will find his own great advantage in it, and may confidently hope that he will one day obtain mercy from the Lord, according to these words of the Gospel, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*.

Water does not so easily wash away the spots off our clothes, says St. John Chrysostom, as alms wash off the spots of our souls and blot out the stains of our sins. They extinguish sin as water extinguishes fire, says the Holy Scripture ; they *deliver from death, purge away sin, and make a man find mercy and eternal life*. In fine, alms deeds are more beneficial to the charitable giver than to the distressed receiver, which made the eloquent St. Cyprian formerly say to some poor objects, who returned him thanks for the alms he had given them, that it was rather incumbent on him to thank them for having exposed their wants, and afforded him a favourable opportunity to sow a few grains of seed, from which he hoped to reap an abundant harvest and to derive the most signal advantages. All other riches which men accumulate on earth, will quit them at the hour of death and devolve to others, who perhaps will soon forget them ; but the alms which they hide in the bosom of the poor will precede, accompany and follow them to the other world, and stand their best friends at the bar of Divine Justice. *Blessed, therefore, is the man who considers the necessities of the poor, and relieves them ; the Lord will treat him mildly and sweetly in the evil day*, as the Royal Prophet speaks, Ps. xl. For this reason our Saviour cautions us in the Gospel, not to set our hearts and affections on the perishable goods of this world, but to make for ourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity ; that is, to gain over the poor on our side by plentiful alms, that when all other things fail us, the alms we have distributed may plead our cause on the day of need, and the poor objects we have relieved may intercede for us like so many powerful advocates before the throne of God, and may procure us admittance into the eternal tabernacles of glory. Since then, my brethren, works of mercy and deeds of charity are so acceptable and so meritorious in the sight of God ; since they are productive of so many salutary effects and signal advantages, both to our spiritual and temporal concerns ; since they are so strongly inculcated by the voice of nature, the feelings of humanity and the dictates of religion, it is hoped that ye will come forward with alacrity, and contribute according to your abilities to the support of the laudable charity of this day. *If you have much, give abundance*, says Tobias ; *if a little, take care to bestow willingly a little*. And that you may partake of the blessed effects of your alms, give cheerfully, with a willing heart and a pleasant countenance ; since, as St. Paul says, 2 Cor. ix. *God loveth a cheerful giver*. Give as to God, and not as to man ; give with a pure intention for God's sake, to relieve Jesus Christ in the person of his little ones. Let the chief object of your compassion be your own immortal souls ; for, as St. Augustine remarks, Christ requires from you, in the first place, the soul which he redeemed with his sacred blood, *Hoc requirit, quod redemit*. To make him an offering of your external goods, and to refuse him your souls,

is to imitate unhappy Cain, who presented the worst of his flock and reserved the best for himself. Christian charity embraces all mankind, and tenders its good offices to every one in real distress, notwithstanding the difference of his religion, country or profession, as our Divine Master teaches us in the parable of the merciful Samaritan. It does not exclude any real object from the acts of its universal benevolence. Prudence and discretion are indeed to be used in the choice of proper objects; but as St. John Chrysostom observes too anxious an inquiry and an over-great suspicion of imposture are to be avoided, as being contrary to Christian simplicity and fraternal charity.

The poor little children, whose cause I wish to plead with some degree of success, look up to you now with confidence; they claim a right to your protection and deserve your particular attention; they are unquestionably real and proper objects, as they are either fatherless, motherless, friendless or helpless; they have neither the will nor the power to misapply or abuse your charitable donations, which are expended by their trustees with the strictest economy, for their sole use and real benefit. Since the first establishment of this charity, a great number of poor reduced room-keeper's children have been essentially relieved these several years past, both in their corporal and spiritual necessities; they have been rescued from the jaws of destruction, preserved from the corruption of the streets, instructed in their moral duties, educated in the fear and love of God, trained up to habits of virtue and apprenticed to proper trades, which now afford them a comfortable support without being a burden to the public. The flock of children who are your humble petitioners this day, expect by your charitable aid to partake of the like advantages, and to be enabled to become in process of time useful, industrious and edifying members of society; they have no other resource at present but your benevolence; they stand in need of a continuance of your annual contributions, in order to defray the heavy expenses that are incurred by providing them with clothing and other necessities.

You cannot be insensible, my brethren, of the great advantages of giving children a Christian education, and impressing their tender minds with good principles and an early tincture of piety and religion; the honour and glory of God are thereby promoted, the loss and ruin of numberless souls are prevented, and the dreadful evils that usually spring from ignorance and idleness are in a great measure obviated and remedied; nay, whether we consider it in a religious or in a civil point of view, it is a matter of great importance to form youth to habits of virtue and honest industry, and to diffuse a spirit of religion among the lower ranks of people at an early period of life. This is a truth so obvious, that in every civilized nation the education of youth is looked upon as an object of the first magnitude, as it is one of the most effectual means, not

only to stem the torrent of iniquity and to reform the depraved morals of the age, but likewise to preserve peace and order in civil society, and to advance the welfare and the happiness of the community at large. May I not then conclude, my brethren, that nothing deserves more encouragement, nothing is more worthy of your patronage and protection, than those charitable societies and institutions which the piety of the faithful has established, for the purpose of giving a christian education to poor, helpless, destitute children, and providing them with necessary clothing and proper trades, which are to be their future support. The example of our separated brethren of every religious denomination, who on similar occasions seem to be actuated with uncommon zeal, should excite in you an holy emulation to exercise your humanity, and testify your charity to the little ones assembled here this day. Let me entreat you to open your eyes and see their wants, to open your ears and hearken to their petitions, to open your hearts and compassionate them, to open your hands and purses and extend your charity towards their support and education. Remember, that by clothing and aiding them in their respective necessities, you clothe and aid Jesus Christ, who says in the Gospel, that whatever you do to his little ones he will consider it as done to himself in person. I shall therefore conclude with the advice of St. Augustine: Give some share of your worldly substance to Jesus Christ, to whom you owe all you have and possess; reckon him among your children; count one more in your family; reserve a child's portion for him; clothe, feed and relieve him this day in the persons of his poor, little, innocent members; and in return they will be bound to raise their hearts and voices to Heaven in your behalf, and supplicate the Giver of all good gifts to shower down the treasures of his grace and mercy on all their benefactors in this life, and to grant that on the last day, they may be ranked in the thrice happy number of those who are to be invited by Jesus Christ to the inheritance of his heavenly kingdom, with these comfortable words, *Come ye blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Mat. c. xxv. v. 34. Which is the blessing I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI, AND THE SECOND AFTER PEN- TECOST.

*On the transcendent dignity and excellency of the Sacra-
ment of the Eucharist, and the veneration due to it.*

Homo quidam fecit coenam magnam, et vocavit multos.—*Luk. c. xiv. v. 16.*

A certain man made a great supper, and invited many to it.—*Luk. c. xiv. v. 16.*

IT is related in the first chapter of the Book of Esther, that Assuerus, King of Persia, being desirous to display his power and grandeur, made a most sumptuous and elegant feast, to which he invited the nobility and gentry of his kingdom for the space of one hundred and eighty days successively. Nothing that could be purchased or acquired, though ever so costly or exquisite, was deficient, but every thing abounded that could contribute to aggrandize this royal banquet; however, it was but a shadow of the delicious and heavenly banquet alluded to in the words of my text, and called by St. Paul the *Lord's Supper*, because it was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ at his last supper, or the last time he eat the legal supper of the Paschal Lamb with his disciples in the city of Jerusalem. The supper which our Lord provided then is the blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, a supper fitter for Angels than for men, and suitable in every respect to his infinite goodness and boundless liberality. It may truly and justly be called a *Great Supper*, not only on account of the incomparable grandeur of him who instituted and prepared it, and the numberless multitude of guests who are invited to partake of it, but also for the intrinsic value of the food that is offered thereat. The food which we are here presented with, is not terrene or corruptible, but divine and incorruptible, and instituted for the nourishment of the spiritual life of our souls. We all partake of it, and still it is not diminished; we all eat of it, and still it remains whole and entire. One eats of it, and a thousand eat of it, and this one receives Christ entire, and a thousand do no more. This banquet is to continue, not for half a year only, like that of King Assuerus, but every day unto the consummation of ages and the end of the world.

There is no set number of guests invited to it ; all mankind in general are welcome to the table of Jesus, provided they come clothed with the nuptial garment. The poor have as free access as the rich ; the feeble, the blind, the lame, have the honour to be invited ; nay, not only to be invited, but even to be pressed and importuned to come under pain of incurring his displeasure, and of being liable to be treated like the guests mentioned in the Gospel, who were excluded from the banquet of eternal glory because they refused to accept of the affectionate invitation which had been given them.

The blessed *Eucharist* is so called from a Greek word that signifies *thanksgiving*, because at its first institution Christ rendered thanks to his heavenly Father, and because it is to be received by us with thanksgiving, and is daily offered to God in thanksgiving for all his gracious favours and blessings, it being both a Sacrament and a Sacrifice, as it is not only *given to us*, but likewise *given and offered for us*. It is a Sacrament in the Holy Communion and a Sacrifice in the Mass, and in both respects it surpasses by many degrees all the sacraments and sacrifices of the old Testament, which have therefore been abolished in order to make way for it. In memory of, and in thanksgiving for so valuable a treasure, and so signal a favour, the Church has instituted the grand festival and solemn octave of Corpus Christi, during which she calls on all her children all over the world to honour Jesus Christ in the blessed Eucharist, with a kind of triumph, and to praise and magnify him for the love and mercy he has been pleased to testify in the institution of this most holy sacrament and sacrifice of the new Law. To inspire you with the like pious sentiments, I will, in the first place, endeavour to lay before you the transcendent dignity and excellency of this Sacrament of the Eucharist ; and in the second place, I will shew you that it is most worthy of your profound respect and veneration. Let us previously implore the divine assistance, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, greeting her for this end with the words of the Angel. *Ave Maria*.

As the sun is the most noble of the seven planets, and gold the most precious of all metals, the blessed Eucharist is the most holy of the seven sacraments of the new Law, and surpasses all the sacraments, figures, and types of the old Law, by as many degrees as Jesus Christ himself, in person and dignity, excels all the victims and oblations that were formerly immolated and offered by the people of God. It was prefigured by the tree of life that was planted in the middle of the earthly Paradise ; it was prefigured by the bread and wine that were offered in sacrifice by the High Priest Melchisedech, and by the bread that the Prophet Elias was nourished with in the wilderness, and by the holy loaves of proposition that were placed on a table before the inward sanctuary in the Jewish Temple ; it was prefigured by the manna from Heaven with

which the Children of Israel were fed in the desert; by the Paschal Lamb of the Jews; by the blood of the testament, with which Moses sprinkled the people, and by the peace-offerings and other ancient sacrifices of the Mosaic Law.— These were only types and figures of the blessed Eucharist, and consequently they were as inferior to it in dignity, as the image or picture of a king is inferior to the king himself in person. This made St. Paul, call all the ancient types and figures *weak and beggarly elements, and mere shadows of the good things to come*, or that were to be given to the children of grace, under the new Law of the Gospel, Heb. x. Gal. iv. The very nature of the thing shews that the figure must necessarily be inferior to the thing prefigured, and that the shadow and type must be inferior to the substance and reality. Hence the old Law was annulled by *reason of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof*, Heb. c. vii. v. 18. Hence it is, also, that the blessed Eucharist has justly taken place of the ancient figures: no sooner was it instituted, but they were abolished. They vanished and disappeared, as the stars disappear at the approach of the sun, and as the darkness of the night vanishes away when the light begins to shine.

This alone is sufficient to prove the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist; for if there was nothing more in it than a figure of his body and blood, or bread and wine taken in remembrance of him, the figures of the old Law would not only equal, but even excel this great sacrament of the new Law, and be many degrees superior to it. It is evident that the Paschal Lamb, for instance, was a far more noble type of Christ, and represented him much better than a bit of bread. The blood of victims, solemnly offered to God, was also a more excellent figure of his sacred blood than the juice of the grape, and the miraculous manna which the Scripture calls the *bread of Angels*, was far beyond the bread of man. Yet Christ our Lord promised in St. John, c. vi. to give us in the Eucharist something better, something more noble, more excellent, more sacred, more heavenly, and more divine than the manna from Heaven, the Paschal Lamb, the blood of the Testament, or than the other ancient types and figures, and consequently than common bread and wine; he promised to present us with the substance and truth instead of types and shadows; he promised to feed our souls with a *wonderful life-giving food from Heaven, that would bring eternal life, and make us abide in him, and him in us*; he promised, in fine, to grant us some special and signal favour, which had not been granted to the Jews; for he said, *The bread which I will give you is my flesh, for the life of the world; not as your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and died: He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.* It was on the very eve of his passion and death, the *very night that he was betrayed* by Judas, as St. Paul tells us, that he actually fulfilled his promise, and perfected his last will and

testament. He feasted the souls of his disciples with the divine and heavenly banquet of his own body and blood in the blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, which he then instituted ; and that this inestimable legacy of his love might continue in his Church to the end of the world, he at the same time ordained them Priests of the new Law, empowering them, and their lawful successors in the ministry, to do what he himself then did, that is, to consecrate bread and wine into his body and blood, for a perpetual commemoration of his death. St. Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, c. xi. assures us, that he learned this mystery by a special revelation from Jesus Christ. The account he gives there of the last supper, is similar to that which is given by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, and affords us another strong proof of the real presence of Christ in the blessed sacrament of the Eucharist ; for in ch. 10. v. 16. of said epistle, the Apostle calls it, in express terms, *the communion of the body and blood of Christ*, which was delivered, broken, or sacrificed for us on the Cross ; and in c. xi. v. 27, 29, he says, *that whosoever receives it unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and that he eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the body of our Lord*, which clearly proves that the body and blood of the Lord must be really present in the sacrament ; for if what the unworthy receiver takes was no more than bread and wine, or a figure of the Lord, he would not be *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* ; nor could he be blamed for *not discerning the body of the Lord*, but only for not discerning a figure of it ; nor could he be said to *eat and drink damnation to himself*. How could a Christian discern it, if it be not there really present ? How could he be *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, or *eat and drink damnation to himself*, if he does not receive the body and blood of the Lord, or if what he receives be nothing but bread and wine, or only an empty figure or sign of Christ ? The heavenly manna and the Paschal Lamb were more lively figures of Christ than a morsel of bread, and yet those who eat them, in the state of sin, could not be said to be *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, or to *eat and drink their own damnation*. As to the words, *Do this in remembrance of me*, which the Apostle quotes in the aforesaid Epistle to the Corinthians, he informs us, v. 26, that what we are thereby commanded to remember, as often as we receive the body of Christ, is the death of Christ, which being a thing not really present, but really past, is a most proper subject for our devout and grateful remembrance. Even such things as are not visibly present, or that we are liable to forget, may be the object of our remembrance, whether they be really present or really absent. Thus we are commanded in the Scripture to *remember God*, Deuter. viii. Eccles. xii. *though in him we live, move, and have our being*. The remembrance, therefore, of Christ, and of his death, which is enjoined in the aforesaid words, is by no

means opposite to his real presence in the sacrament. But does not St. Paul call it *bread*? He does, and so does Christ himself; but they both inform us what this *bread* is. Christ assures us that it is *the very flesh which he gave for the life of the world*, John, c. vi. v. 51, and which *was given and delivered for us*, Luke, xxii. And St. Paul tells us that it is the *Communion of the Body of Christ*, 1 Cor. c. x. v. 16. It is called *bread* because it is a supernatural, divine, and spiritual bread of life, that feeds and nourishes the Soul as natural and material bread nourishes the body; for which reason Christ our Lord says, John, c. vi. v. 54. *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall have no life in you.* It is also called *bread*, because, before the consecration it is bread, and it still retains the outward appearance of bread even after the consecration, when the inward substance both of the bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ's real body and blood, by the same almighty power that changed the substance of water into the substance of wine at the wedding of Cana, St. John, c. ii. To ask *how this can be*, is a question like unto that of the incredulous Jews of Capharnaum, and is more becoming an infidel than a Christian who believes in a God, to whom nothing is impossible. Surely the power of the Son of God cannot be denied by any one who professes the Christian religion. He is undoubtedly able to take any form or appearance he thinks proper, and to render his body visible or invisible as he pleases; he can make it penetrate doors and stone walls, and be present, one and the same, in many different places at once, without being exposed to the external senses, or being obnoxious to corporal contingencies, any more than his blessed soul. He can render himself truly and really present with his whole and entire body, under the smallest consecrated host, in the same circumscription and dimensions that the bread and wine were before the consecration; for as his body is now immortal and impassible, it partakes in some measure of the properties and qualities of a spirit, and may, in the words of St. Paul, be called a spiritualized or *spiritual body*, 1 Cor. c. xv. v. 44. As a spirit, therefore, has no dependence on place, and is neither confined by it nor to it, and as it really exists without requiring external extension for its existence, so in like manner, the body of Christ really and truly exists in the blessed Eucharist, and retains there all that is essential to a body, but does not require actual or external extension of parts, this being only accidental to a body. Moreover, as a spirit is not obnoxious to corporal contingencies, or liable to be hurt, divided or corrupted, so likewise the body of Christ is not liable to be hurt or to suffer any alteration in this sacrament. It is only the accident or sacramental species, under which it is here veiled, that are subject to such changes, and may be broken, divided and consumed. These only we see with our corporal eyes and touch with our hands, but we neither behold

the divinity nor the humanity of Christ, though here really present; for it is not the eye of the flesh, but the eye of faith, that pierces through the clouds with which he is here encompassed, and that beholds with wonder the dazzling rays and splendour of his infinite Majesty, hidden and veiled under the poor elements and humble appearances of bread and wine. However, it is not to be inferred from this, that the evidence or testimony of the senses militates against this mystery, or that they are deceived in their proper object, since the senses are affected in the same manner, and receive the same impressions, after the consecration as before it. They behold and discern the same outward appearances and qualities; they truly perceive, represent and bear witness of the accident, which are their proper and immediate object; as to the inward substance, it is not the proper and immediate object of the senses, but the object of the understanding and judgment, which is deceived when it too hastily concludes, on account of the outward appearances, that a thing is in effect what it appears to be. Regularly speaking, indeed, we may be directed by our senses, when neither reason nor divine authority obliges us to judge otherwise. But if reason or divine authority interposes and assures us of the contrary, we are to form a different judgment. We are to be guided by God's word, which makes things infinitely surer than any direction our judgment may receive from the testimony of our senses, which, as we know by experience, are often apt to lead us astray. Thus, when at Christ's resurrection and ascension, the Angels appeared under the outward form of young men, clothed in white garments, and when the Holy Ghost appeared in the shape of a dove and of fiery tongues, the faithful who beheld them were not to rely on the testimony of their senses, nor to conclude that these things really were what they appeared to be, because the authority of God's word intervened, and assured them that what appeared to be a dove, fiery tongues and young men, was not really so, but was the Holy Ghost and Angels, under these outward appearances. The only sense we may safely trust in regard of the judgment we are to form concerning the inward part of the blessed Sacrament, is the sense of hearing, which assures us by the word of God, and by the authority of God's Church, which, according to the Apostle, 1 Tim. c. iii. v. 15. *is the pillar and ground of the truth*, and consequently, not liable to error, that, what appears to our senses to be bread and wine, is truly and really the body and blood of Christ. There is no greater difficulty in believing this, notwithstanding any thing our senses may suggest to the contrary, than there is in believing the dove and fiery tongues to have been the Holy Ghost, and the young men to have been Angels, although to the senses they appeared to be quite another thing.

Now, as to the respect and veneration due to the blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, it follows necessarily from what

has been hitherto said and proved, that it is to be worshipped with divine honour and adoration, as it contains truly and really the divine Person of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, who is certainly most worthy to be honoured and adored wheresoever he is. Let unbelievers misrepresent it as they please, there is no more danger of idolatry to be apprehended in worshipping and adoring him in the Sacrament, than there is in worshipping and adoring him in Heaven. It is not to the outward sacramental signs under which he is veiled, that this honour is paid, but our adoration is evidently directed to the Divinity itself, and immediately paid to Jesus Christ, who is no idol or imaginary God, but the true and living God. He is the object of our adoration, and indeed the more he has humbled himself here for our sake, the more we are indebted to him for his love, the more zealous we should be in testifying our gratitude and veneration for him, and the more assiduous in uniting ourselves to him by devout and fervent communion. Such are the pious sentiments which the Church, ever guided by the Holy Ghost, wishes to excite in her children all over the world during this solemn octave. She apprizes them in the words of the Angels, mentioned in the second chapter of the Apocalypse, that *the Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive honour, glory, and benediction*. She exposes the divine sacrament to their view, in a remonstrance, placed in the tabernacle, that they may come and throw themselves at the feet of Jesus, like Mary Magdalen, and pour out their hearts in fervent prayers before the altar, as Anne the mother of Samuel did before the Ark of the Covenant; she invites them to approach the delicious banquet and great supper of her beloved spouse with the necessary dispositions, that their souls may be replenished with grace and enriched with celestial blessings. In fine, she calls on them in these words of the Royal Prophet, Ps. xciv. *to come, adore, and prostrate themselves before Jesus Christ, because he is the Lord our God*. This is what the three Kings, or wise men of the East did, when they found him in the stable of Bethlehem, lying on a heap of straw in a manger between two beasts, without any outward appearances of divinity, ensigns of royalty, or marks of grandeur. Far from being scandalized on beholding him in so poor, mean, and despicable a condition; far from listening to the suggestions of pride, or the reasonings of human wisdom; far from relying on the testimony of their senses, which exhibited nothing to their view but a poor, forlorn, distressed infant, they prostrated themselves before him with a lively faith, they adored him as their God, and in acknowledgment of his divinity, royalty and humanity, they presented him with three mystical gifts, of frankincense, gold and myrrh. Their conduct is a lesson for us; we should learn from it not to be guided by the testimony of our fallible senses in matters beyond their reach, nor to conclude rashly, in direct opposition to divine revelation,

that a thing is always in reality what it appears to be. Far from staggering in our faith, or disbelieving the real presence of Christ in the blessed Eucharist, because we do not see any visible appearances or distinctive marks of infinite majesty and grandeur about him; far from being incredulous, like Thomas, because we do not feel the print of the nails and the scars of the wounds in his sacred body, we should approach him like the wise men of the East with a lively faith, and offer him the gold of an ardent charity, the incense of fervent and devout prayer, and the myrrh of a mortified and penitential life; we should submit our reason to his infallible word, and believe upon his divine authority what we neither see nor comprehend, that we may be entitled to the blessed reward that he has promised in the Gospel to those who believe and do not see. *Because thou hast seen me*, said he to Thomas the Apostle, *thou hast believed; happy they who have not seen and have believed*, St. John, c. xx. v. 29.

O Divine Jesus, we therefore firmly believe that thou art really present in the blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist; we believe that it contains thy sacred body and blood, accompanied with thy soul and divinity; we acknowledge these great truths; we believe these wonders; we adore the power that has wrought them; the same power that said, *Let there be light, and light was made*. We submit our senses and reason to thy divine authority; we praise and glorify thy infinite goodness, which hast prepared this *Great Supper* for the nourishment of our souls during the course of our mortal pilgrimage here on earth. Thy holy prophet David had just reason to cry out with extasy, in Ps. xc. *Our merciful and gracious Lord hath made a memorial of his wonderful works, and hath given food to them that fear him*. Blessed be thy name for ever. Accept our homage, O Lord, accept our most hearty thanks, and give us grace to receive this sacrament of thy love with such reverence and humility, such purity and faith, such contrition and devotion, as may be for thy honour and our own salvation, and prepare us for that eternal banquet of glory which is reserved for thy elect in the kingdom of Heaven. And which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen*.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Christus dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro novis hostiam, et sacrificium Deo in odorem suavitatis.

Ephes. c. v. v. 2.

Christ loved us, and delivered himself for us an oblation and a sacrifice to God, for an odour of sweetness,

Eph. c. v. v. 2.

TO offer sacrifice to the Supreme Being, in acknowledgment of his sovereign dominion over all creatures, has, since the beginning of the world, been always considered as a necessary duty of man, and an essential part of true religion; and the Almighty has vouchsafed to accept of oblations of this kind as an agreeable worship, when they were accompanied with the inward sacrifice of the heart and with faith in the promised Redeemer, who was to come in the plenitude of time. Hence Abel, Enos, Noe, Melchisedech, Abraham, Job, and other holy Patriarchs and servants of God, who lived under the law of nature, thought it their duty to raise altars to the honour of the Deity, and to sacrifice whatever they deemed fittest to express the humble sentiments and inward dispositions of their souls, and to testify the supreme homage which they owed the Divine Majesty. In the law of Moses, when the Lord himself was pleased to reveal to his chosen people the particular manner in which he was willing to be honoured and worshipped by them, he instituted a great variety of sacrifices, some of which were called *Holocausts*, or *Whole Burnt Offerings*; some *Propitiatory*, or *Sin Offerings*; others *Thanksgiving Offerings*; others *Pacific*, or *Peace Offerings*. But these sacrifices had no intrinsic virtue or efficacy in themselves, and were only acceptable to God in view of the great sacrifice of the new law which they prefigured. For this reason, St. Paul calls them weak and beggarly elements, types and empty shadows of the good things that were to come. Christ, our Divine Redeemer, by one offering on the cross accomplished them all, and comprehended them all in the unity of his sacrifice, which is at the same time an Holocaust, a Sacrifice of Propitiation, a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving, and a Sacrifice of Impetration, and by which he paid the full price of our redemption, cancelled the hand-writing of death that stood in full force against us, and perfected for ever them that are

sanctified, as the Apostle speaks. All other means of sanctification and salvation derive their force and efficacy from this great sacrifice which he offered on the cross; and it was to renew the memory of it, and to apply the fruits and merits of it to our souls, that he instituted the Eucharist and commemorative Sacrifice of the Mass, which he continues to offer daily on our altars by the ministry of the Priests of his Church; for his love for mankind was not contented with offering himself once upon the cross a bleeding victim for our sins, but he was willing also to leave his Church a continual sacrifice worthy of himself, that the same precious blood which he shed for our sake on Mount Calvary, might continue to the end of the world to cry aloud to Heaven from our altars for mercy and pardon in our behalf. With reason, therefore, the Apostle says, *Christ loved us, and delivered himself for us, an oblation and sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness.* In the sacrifice of the Cross he offered himself in a bloody manner; in the sacrifice of the Mass he offers himself in an unbloody manner; so that the sacrifice of the Mass is not a distinct sacrifice from the sacrifice of the Cross, but one and the self-same in substance, differing only in the manner of offering. In short, the Mass is a true and proper sacrifice, than which nothing is more ancient, nothing is more holy, nothing is more august in the Christian religion, and consequently, it is necessary to be present thereat with great reverence, attention and devotion. Behold the whole plan of the following discourse and the subject of your favourable attention: Let us previously implore the divine assistance, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, &c. *Ave Maria.*

Although a contrite and humble heart, fasting, prayer, alms deeds, and every good work that is done to honour God, may be called a sacrifice in a metaphorical sense, as St. Augustine observes, l. 10. de Civ. c. 6. yet strictly and properly speaking, sacrifice is an external act of religion, or an outward offering of some visible or sensible thing made to God by a lawful Priest, to acknowledge the supreme dominion of God over all creatures, and to render him the homage that is due to his Sovereign Majesty. The same holy Doctor remarks, that all nations, however barbarous and savage, that ever acknowledged the existence of a Supreme Being, and all religions, whether true or false, have always looked upon sacrifice as the special prerogative of the Divinity, and the principal means to testify the total subjection and dependence of man, and the supreme worship he owes to God. St. Jerom also says, there never was a religion without a sacrifice, nor a church without priests, nor priests without altars, nor altars without a victim or oblation; religion, sacrifice and priesthood being so closely united, that the principal function of priests and the most solemn act of religion is to offer sacrifice to the Deity in some form or other. Can it then be supposed, that

Christ would leave his Church in the new Law without an essential part of religion, and destitute of the principal means of honouring God? Can it be imagined that he would abandon her, like the Jewish synagogue, which is without a priest, without a sacrifice, without an altar? No, my brethren. We have an altar, says the Apostle, Heb. c. xiii. v. 10. and consequently we have a sacrifice; we have the eucharistic and commemorative sacrifice of the Mass, which Christ instituted at his last supper, and which the Scripture mentions, Acts, c. xiii. v. 2. where we read in the Greek original, *As they were sacrificing to the Lord, and fasting, &c.* The acts of the martyrdom of St. Andrew the Apostle, which Natalis Alexander, and other learned writers maintain to be genuine, though contested by some, make mention of this sacrifice in the following words, which the Apostle said to his persecutors. *I offer every day on the altar to the Almighty God an immaculate Lamb, whose flesh indeed is eaten, but the Lamb remains whole and entire.* St. Justin, St. Irenæus, Tertullian, St. Cyril of Alexandria, and other Doctors of the primitive Church, assert in express terms, that the Apostles learned from Christ to offer this sacrifice throughout the earth. St. Augustine, who flourished upwards of fourteen hundred years ago, assures us *l. 16 de Civ.* and in *Ps. 109.* that this sacrifice was then celebrated in the Church all over the Christian world. He informs us also, *Libr. 9 Conf.* that his mother Monica, at her dying hour, entreated him to offer it up at the altar of God for the happy repose of her soul, from a persuasion that the souls of the faithful departed, are relieved by this sacrifice of our Mediator, as he speaks in *Enchyr. c. 110. l. de Cur. Mort.* It was expedient and just that there should be such a sacrifice in the Christian Church, in order to join all the faithful together in the external duties of religion, to pay unto God the homage that is due to him, to give him thanks for all his blessings, to implore the forgiveness of our sins, and to obtain such favours and graces as we daily stand in need of. Prefigurative Sacrifices were required in the Law of nature and in the written Law of Moses, to represent the Sacrifice of the Cross and to prefigure the death of Christ, then to come; in like manner a Commemorative Sacrifice was required in the new Law, to be a standing memorial of the Sacrifice of the Cross, and to represent the death of Christ, now already past. This Commemorative Sacrifice is no more derogatory or injurious to the infinite value and efficacy of the Sacrifice of the Cross, than the Prefigurative Sacrifices of the old Law were; on the contrary, it honors it highly, as it serves to renew and perpetuate the memory of it to the end of the world, and to impart the benefit of it to our souls. Nay, it is the same in substance with the Sacrifice of the Cross, because it is the same victim, Jesus Christ, that is sacrificed in both; and the same High Priest, Jesus Christ,

who is the principal offerer in both. The only difference consists in this, that the Sacrifice of the Cross was a bloody sacrifice, because Christ then actually shed his blood and was really put to death; but the Commemorative Sacrifice of the Mass is an unbloody sacrifice, wherein the death of Christ is only mystically represented, and shewn forth on the altar by the separate consecration of the bread and wine, which denotes the real shedding of his blood, and the actual separation of his body and soul at his death.

Nothing is wanting here that is necessary to constitute a true and proper sacrifice; neither victim, nor priest, nor altar, nor oblation, nor consummation. It is an outward oblation of the body and blood of Christ under the visible forms of bread and wine; it is offered to God alone, and not to any creature in Heaven or on earth; it is offered for the four great ends of sacrifice; it is offered for the whole Church in its three different states, that is, for the Church triumphant in Heaven, in thanksgiving to God for the graces bestowed on the Saints in this life, and for the happiness they now enjoy; for the Church militant on earth, to draw down the blessings of Heaven on the faithful, and for the Church suffering in Purgatory, to obtain relief for them in their sufferings, and a speedy admittance to eternal glory. The oblation is here made by a lawful priest properly ordained, consecrated and authorized to officiate in Christ's name, and as his vicegerent, he being the chief priest or principal offerer as well as the victim that is offered; for, as it was Christ that offered himself, and that was offered upon the Cross, so in the like manner it is Christ that offers himself, and that is offered on the altar, by the hands of the officiating priest, who acts under him as his visible substitute, and who, therefore, when he comes to the consecration, wherein this sacrifice essentially consists, speaks and acts, not in his own name, or by his own authority, but in the name and person of Christ, saying, *This is my body; this is the chalice of my blood.* The oblation that is here made, is also accompanied with a real change and destruction of the inward substance of the bread and wine, and with a real presenting of the body and blood of Christ, our victim, under appearances which denote his real death. On the cross he actually died, and really shed his precious blood for our sake, his body being then mortal and passible; on the altar he can only admit of a mystical death, and of a mystical effusion of blood, his body being now glorious, immortal, and impassible. He is here really exhibited to his eternal Father under the two separate species, without any visible sign of life, motion, or action, and under the figure and appearance of death, as if he was really dead, according to what was shewn to St. John in the Apocalypse, when he said, *I saw a Lamb standing, as it were slain*, not actually or really slain, but *as it were slain*, or under the appearance of

being slain, which is sufficient to a true and proper sacrifice, it being evident, from several sacrifices of the old Law, that a real immolation or total destruction of the thing offered in sacrifice to God was not always required. In holocausts, indeed, the victim was entirely consumed, to represent, in the most perfect manner, the supreme dominion of God over all creatures; but in other kinds of sacrifices it was sufficient to make such a change in the host as it was susceptible of. The victim was commonly consumed in part only, and of the rest was made a spiritual banquet for the priests and the people. This represented the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass, wherein both the priest and the people are spiritually nourished with the heavenly banquet and communion of the body and blood of the adorable victim of their redemption, Jesus Christ, who, to denote the complete oblation he made of himself, was, like a pure holocaust, as it were, entirely consumed by death upon the cross for the glory of his eternal Father. Thus by offering himself up in a bloody manner on the cross, he not only exercised and fulfilled the priestly order of Aaron, but he likewise exercised and fulfilled the priestly order of Melchisedech, by instituting and offering up the Eucharistic Sacrifice on the very eve of his passion and death; for it is evident, from the account given by the Evangelists of the institution of the blessed Eucharist, that Christ not only gave it to his disciples at his last supper, to be received by them as a sacrament and spiritual banquet in the holy communion, but that he likewise gave it for them, and offered it for them and for many, as a propitiatory sacrifice for the remission of sins. And that this sacrifice might continue to be offered up in his Church unto the end of the world, he at the same time ordained his Apostles Priests of the new Law, and empowered and commanded them and their lawful successors in the ministry, to consecrate and offer up the blessed Eucharist for a perpetual commemoration of his passion and a grateful remembrance of his death, as appears from these words, *Do this in remembrance of me*, that is, as St. Paul explains it, to shew forth the death of the Lord till his second coming at the end of the world. Hence it is, that the Scripture stiles him *our High Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech*, which he could not be truly and properly called if he had not instituted a sacrifice similar to that of Melchisedech, which was to be offered to the end of the world by inferior priests, subordinate to his priesthood; for, as the order of Melchisedech's priesthood consisted principally in this, that he offered up bread and wine in sacrifice, Christ our Lord can only be stiled *our High Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech*, on account of the outward resemblance between Melchisedech's sacrifice and the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass, which he instituted and

still continues to offer up by the ministry of the Priests of his Church under the visible form of bread and wine.

This is the pure oblation of the new Law, which the Prophet Malachy foretold and pointed out in the strongest light in his first chapter, tenth and eleventh verses, where he tells us that the *Jewish Sacrifices were to be rejected, and to be succeeded by a new sacrifice and a pure oblation, which would be offered up to God in every place among the Gentiles, from the rising of the sun to the setting.* Both the Greek and Latin Doctors have made use of this text to prove that the Blessed Eucharist is not only a Sacrament, but likewise a sacrifice, wherein the body of Christ is representatively immolated, and his blood is mystically shed and separated from the body by virtue of the words of consecration, as by a spiritual sword. To pretend that this prophecy regards only the sacrifice of the Cross, is a manifest error, because the sacrifice of the Cross was only offered in one single place of Judea, on Mount Calvary, and the Prophet tells us, that the sacrifice he speaks of shall be *offered in every place among the Gentiles, from the rising to the setting of the sun.* Neither can this prediction be understood of an inward or spiritual sacrifice, for besides that the inward sacrifice of the heart, or the spiritual sacrifice of good works is not properly a sacrifice, it being often opposed to sacrifice, as when the Scriptures says, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*; and again *Obedience is better than sacrifice*, it is evident that an inward or spiritual sacrifice is not a new sacrifice, nor to be substituted in the place of the ancient sacrifices, as it existed in all times since the beginning of the world; so that it cannot be of it that the Prophet speaks. It is clear, then, that his words can only be verified in the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ's precious body and blood in the Mass, which is the only pure oblation of the new Law that is made to God in every place among the Gentiles, and that has been substituted by Christ in the place of the ancient sacrifices, which were but types and figures of his sacrifice. There are several other passages in the old Testament which foretel that in the spiritual kingdom, or church of Christ, the Priesthood shall never fail to offer up a continual sacrifice, and that the converted nations shall worship God by sacrifices throughout the world, as long as the Heavens and the earth shall stand. All these predictions clearly point out the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass, and give us to understand that it is to be offered up to God, for an odour of sweetness, till the end of the world, when it is to be abolished by the wicked Antichrist, and the abolition of it shall be an evident mark of the approaching destruction of the universe. As a further proof, I might quote here the most ancient liturgies of all nations and of all ages since the earliest years of Christianity, which make frequent mention of this sacrifice. I might produce the unanimous testimonies of the holy Fathers in every

age, the authority of the general councils, and the most venerable monuments of antiquity, to shew that the sacrifice of the Mass was always offered up in the Church of God all over the Christian world, before Martin Luther started up to oppose it; but it is sufficient at present to observe, that no time can be assigned in which the use of it first began, which is a certain proof, according to the rule laid down by St. Augustine, that it has been handed down by tradition immediately from Christ and his Apostles. Let us now briefly consider the dignity and sanctity of this sacrifice, and the manner of assisting thereat.

To form some idea hereof, we need but consider the dignity of the victim that is here offered, the sanctity of the High Priest who offers it, and the sacred mysteries of our divine Redeemer's passion and death, which are here represented, continued, and renewed. This sacrifice in itself, and as offered by Jesus Christ, is always a most acceptable oblation in the sight of God, independent of the good or bad dispositions of the ministerial Priest, who performs the outward and visible part. In the first place it is a most agreeable holocaust, by which the most perfect homage is paid to God; for though of ourselves we are incapable of paying him an homage proportionable to his grandeur, being no more than an atom in comparison of his infinite Majesty, yet because Jesus Christ humbles himself here for our sake in the most profound manner, under the poor elements of Bread and Wine, and offers himself up by the hands of the Priest *for us and with us*, under the mystical appearance of death, we are thereby enabled to render unto God the greatest homage, adoration and glory that any creature can possibly give to his Creator.

Secondly, the Mass is a most agreeable sacrifice of thanksgiving; for though all the thanks we can render are of no value in themselves, as proceeding from us, yet because Jesus Christ, whose dignity is infinite, puts himself here in our place, and gives infinite thanks to his eternal Father for us and in our name, we have a gift of infinite value to offer to God, and are thus enabled to make him an adequate return for the benefits conferred on us. Hence the officiating Priest calls on us in the midst of the holy mysteries, and says, *Gartias agamus Domino Deo nostro. Let us return thanks to the Lord our God*; reminding the congregation hereby to unite themselves with their High Priest Jesus Christ, and to seize on this favourable opportunity to give unto God the thanks that are justly due to his divine Majesty.

Thirdly, the Mass is a sacrifice of impetration; for though of ourselves we are undeserving of any favour, yet because Jesus Christ offers himself up here *with us*, and *for us*, in order to obtain for us the favours and graces we stand in need of, we have here a most efficacious means to sanctify our petitions, and render them acceptable through the merits of Jesus Christ

our Lord ; for if he has promised in the Gospel that whatever petition we make in his name shall be granted to us, can we ever be said so properly to ask in his name, and through his merits, as when we appear before the throne of God, with himself in person, and present him to the eternal Father, to be our advocate and petitioner? This made the great St. John Chrysostom say, above a thousand years ago, of all times, the time of the sacrifice of the Mass is the most seasonable for obtaining the favours of Heaven, and the most advantageous to negotiate with the Almighty, because the body and blood of Christ are then actually upon our altars, where his sacred blood pleads for us, the virtue of which is infinite, and the voice all-powerful to obtain all that is requested ; for what can God refuse us when we offer him a God in payment for what we ask ?

Fourthly, the Mass is a sacrifice of propitiation for the living and the dead. The blood of the innocent Lamb of God, the infinite price of our redemption, is here offered in satisfaction for our sins according to these words, which Christ said at the institution of this sacrifice, *This is my blood of the new Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* He died upon the Cross for mankind in general, and offered a full and ample satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. In the Eucharistic sacrifice he mystically renews and presents to his heavenly Father the death he suffered on the Cross, and thereby moves him to have mercy on us, and to receive us into favour, which he never will fail to do when we accompany the offering of the victim of our reconciliation with the inward sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, and a true repentance for our sins. By this means the graces which Christ has merited for mankind in general by his death, are actually applied to, and particularly bestowed upon the souls of those who are present at this holy sacrifice, or for whom it is offered in particular, in such manner and proportion as their wants require, and as their greater or less dispositions make them capable of receiving.

Let sinners, therefore, come to this sacrifice with confidence. Jesus Christ will be their mediator and advocate ; his sacred blood will plead their cause and speak in their favour ; it will cry to Heaven for mercy in their behalf ; it will appease the anger of his eternal Father and disarm his justice ; it will move him to compassionate them for Christ's sake, and to excite them, by actual and preventing graces, to a true compunction of heart and a sincere detestation of sin. Let the just come to this sacrifice, that their souls may be enriched with the blessings of Heaven, and that their virtues may be crowned with the great gift of final perseverance. Let the faithful in general come to this sacrifice as frequently as the duties of their respective states will allow them. Half an hour out of the four-and-twenty hours in the day cannot be better employed than by con-

secrating it in this manner to our loving Redeemer, who vouchsafed to hang for the space of three long hours alive on the cross for our sake in the most excruciating pains.

Now I leave yourselves to judge, my brethren, how culpable those Christians must be who make their domestic affairs, and sometimes their criminal amusements, serve as a screen to their coldness and insensibility; who frequent the house of God more out of custom and ostentation than a true love for God and a sincere devotion; who commit so many irreverences even at the foot of the altar, and speak to God with as much carelessness and distraction as if they intended to affront him; whose chief prayer is for temporal blessings and not for everlasting happiness; in fine, who are so far from resembling disciples of Christ, assembled in his name to commemorate the dolorous mysteries of his passion and death, are constantly talking, gazing, disturbing and distracting others. Can such persons expect to draw down the graces and blessings of Heaven, when they approach the altar of God and assist at Mass after so profane, irreligious and insulting a manner?

The very nature of this holy Sacrifice requires, that we should assist at it with great reverence, attention and devotion, according to the method prescribed in your manuals and books of piety. It is one of the most august mysteries of the Christian religion, and the most divine action that can possibly be done by man on earth. We should be present at it with the most exalted ideas of the grandeur of God, and with the most humble sentiments of our own weakness; we should go to it as if we were going to Mount Calvary, to be present at the crucifixion and death of our Lord, like Mary his blessed mother and St. John his beloved disciple. We should form a proper intention, and propose to ourselves the same great ends for which this sacrifice is offered every day by the Church, namely, to honour, adore and glorify God; to give him thanks for all his favours and benefits; to obtain through Jesus Christ the virtues, gifts and graces we still stand in need of; to appease the wrath of Heaven, to supplicate for the pardon of our sins, and to renew the memory of our blessed Redeemer's passion and death. O amiable Jesus, how much are we indebted to thy boundless mercy for leaving us so acceptable a sacrifice? What obligations are we under to thy unspeakable goodness! For our sake thou didst come down from Heaven; thou hast been torn with scourges, crowned with thorns, nailed by the hands and feet to an ignominious cross, and not content with all this, thou renewest the same sacrifice daily for the benefit of our souls. Give us grace, O Divine Saviour, to assist at thy tremendous mysteries with proper dispositions, and to reverence them so as to reap the blessed fruits of thy redemption. O may we never slight or neglect so favourable an opportunity of sanctifying our souls. O may we always appear in thy presence with a lively faith, with a tender piety, with a grateful remembrance

of thy sacred passion, with a spirit of humility and contrition, and with hearts elevated to Heaven. O may thy precious blood plead our cause, cancel our iniquities, purify our souls, and open for us the gates of life everlasting. Which is the happiness I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Referring all our Deliberate Actions to the Honour and Glory of God.

Præceptor, per totam noctem laborantes nihil cepimus.—Luc. c. v. v. 5.

Master, labouring all night we have taken nothing.—St. Luke, c. v. v. 5.

THE Gospel of this day informs us, that as our Blessed Saviour, on a certain day, was standing near the Lake of Genesareth, the zealous multitude pressed upon him with so ardent a desire to hear the word of God, and to learn the science of salvation from his mouth, that he went into a ship belonging to Simon Peter, which was near the shore, and embraced the favourable opportunity to instruct the people and break unto them the bread of life. The ship of Peter, in which he preached to them, was a figure of the Holy Catholic Church, wherein the pure word of God is announced, and from which the faithful are to learn the divine Law, and to receive the orders of Heaven with due submission. The prodigious draught of fishes which, as the Gospel relates, Peter and his companions caught when he launched forth into the deep, and let loose his nets in the name and by the orders of Jesus, denotes the many different nations and tribes of the earth that have been included in the pale of the Church, and converted to the Christian religion by the labours and preaching of the twelve Apostles and their lawful successors in the ministry, who were appointed and constituted the fishers of mens' souls, and who were legally sent as Christ was sent by his heavenly Father, to teach all nations all that is necessary to be believed and to be practised in order to obtain salvation. The great draught of fish also signifies the wonderful power and efficacy of the word of God; and the happy fruits it should produce in us are represented by the conversion of Simon Peter and his companions, who were present at the sermon that our Saviour preached to the pious multitude assembled on the shore; for Simon, first of all, was so deeply penetrated with the heavenly doctrine of Jesus, that

he threw himself at his feet and confessed himself to be an unworthy sinner, undeserving of the honour of being favoured with his divine presence. His companions were no less sensibly affected. From that instant they became disciples of Christ, and without the least hesitation devoted themselves entirely to his service and tuition. Relying on divine Providence, they cheerfully forsook all they possessed, and all their hopes and prospects in the world, in order to amass spiritual treasures for their souls in the kingdom of Heaven. They had laboured all night without any success, until they cast out their nets in the name of Jesus, which shews, that if we wish to see our poor endeavours crowned with success, we must place our confidence in God alone, and implore his divine aid and concurrence. If we rely solely on our own force and natural strength, our expectations will be blasted, and we shall meet with disappointments in the end; for of ourselves, without the assistance of God's grace, we cannot do the least thing, either in thought, word or deed, towards our salvation.

Human pride recoils at this truth, which is the very foundation of true Christian humility, and a convincing proof of our weakness and inability to do good and avoid evil, without the actual grace and preventing mercy of God exciting, strengthening, drawing and moving us thereto. We stand in need of his continual assistance and concurrence in every thing we undertake, as it is *in him we live, in him we move and subsist*. We should therefore consult him in all our enterprizes, and all our actions should begin with him and terminate in him, as all the lines drawn from the circumference of a circle terminate in the centre. Unless we act in his name, and labour for his honour and glory, the day will come when we shall have reason to cry out with Simon Peter and his companions before their conversion, *Master, labouring all night we have taken nothing*; we have laboured in vain and mispent our time to no purpose, in grasping at empty shadows and pursuing delusive vanities; we have undergone much toil and fatigue in the world without any reference to the Lord our God, or a proper regard to the real and permanent joys of his heavenly kingdom. To guard you, my Brethren, against the like misfortune, I will endeavour to shew you, First, how incumbent it is on you to refer all your deliberate actions and employments to the honour and glory of God; and secondly, I will point out the signal advantages that are derived from a faithful compliance with this important duty. Let us previously implore the divine assistance, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, greeting her with the words of the Angel, *Ave Maria*.

It is beyond all dispute that God has created us for no other end but to love and serve him in this life, and to see and enjoy him in the next. The very title of our Creator gives him an indefeasible right to our love and service. He is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the first cause, the beginning and the last end

of all things. He should then be the constant object of our most ardent desires, the centre of all our undertakings, and the end of all our pursuits and designs. To him we are indebted for every thing, and without him we can do nothing. He is our sovereign Lord and absolute Master. We have our existence only for his service and pleasure, and are therefore bound in the strictest justice to obey, honour, and glorify him in all things. Our Blessed Saviour says of himself, *I came down from Heaven not to do my own will, but to do the will of him that sent me*, Jo. c. vi. v. 38. It is no less true of us, that we have been created by the Almighty God, and placed in this world not to do our own will, but the will of him that created us. This is the very end of our being, and to deviate from it is to frustrate the gracious designs of our Creator, and oppose his supreme dominion and unlimited jurisdiction over us and all his creatures. Every day, every hour, every moment of our life belongs to him, and should be employed in serving him in our respective stations. All our thoughts, words, and actions, and all the motions of our souls are a debt we owe to his infinite goodness. We ought of course to offer, refer, and direct them to him, and in all our proceedings to aim at promoting his honour and glory. This is not only our duty, but likewise our interest; for they only who glorify him will be entitled on the last day to receive that never-fading Crown of Glory which he promises to his faithful servants, 1 Kings, c. ii. v. 30. where he expressly says, *Those who glorify me I will crown with glory*. He is satisfied to leave the profit and utility of all our works and actions entirely to ourselves, but he reserves all the glory of them to himself alone; for, as the Prophet Isaias tells us, c. xlii, *He will not part with his glory, nor give it to another*. It is his unalienable right, and he will not suffer it to be invaded with impunity.

Reason, as well as religion, teaches us that nothing is more just than that we should have his honour and glory constantly in view, and act always with a pure intention of pleasing him and complying with his holy will in all things. All Christian virtue depends on this purity of intention. By it the lowest and the least important of our actions are ennobled, elevated to a superior order, and made acts of virtue and works of salvation. Without it, actions the highest, the most brilliant, the most esteemed by men, and the most admired by the world, are good for nothing in the sight of God. Though we should distribute all our substance to the poor, and deliver up our bodies to the flames; though we should convert thousands of souls, and practice all the austerities of the ancient fathers in the desert, yet it avails us nothing in order to life everlasting, if our intention or leading principle be nothing but disguised pride, vain glory and ostentation; for when the intention, which is the eye of the soul, is turned off from God and viciously directed, the action itself, though good in its own nature,

becomes vitiated and infected, and the whole work is darksome, according to these words of the Gospel, *If thy eye be simple, thy whole body will be lightsome ; but if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome*, Mac. c. vi. v. 22. This plainly shews the necessity of rectifying our intention, and acting always upon a proper motive in all our proceedings ; it is not sufficient that what we do and say be good in itself, it must also be good in all its circumstances ; it must be done with a good intention ; otherwise, it will not be worthy of God's complacency and acceptance, neither will it be placed to our account on the last day by the Sovereign Judge and Searcher of hearts, who will not reward with eternal glory those actions that are not done for his sake, nor referred to the honour and glory of his holy name. Then alas ! many Christians who, on account of some external practices of devotion and exercises of piety, to which they are accustomed, flatter themselves that they are amassing spiritual treasures, and that they are rich in virtue and good works, shall find themselves wretched and miserable, poor, blind, bare and naked, as the Scripture says of the bishop in the Apocalypse ; they shall find their hands empty and void of merits, and their souls as unprovided with good works as they were when they first entered into the world. It may be truly said of them what Simon Peter said in this day's Gospel, that *they labour all night and take nothing*, for they work in the dark, and when the fatal night of death arrives they will be entitled to no other reward than that of hypocrites, because instead of labouring for God they sacrifice their actions to human applause, to blind self-love, and to the inclinations of natural constitution. Their alms-deeds, their fasts, their long prayers, their very best actions are tainted and poisoned in their very root ; their pretended virtues are no better than Pagan or Pharisaical virtues ; their whole merit is destroyed, and they are unworthy of God's acceptance, because they are not actuated by the spirit of God, but influenced only by the selfish motives of interest and sensuality. They neither labour with God, nor for God, but for a worldly and human respect, which they blindly make their last end.

To guard against this misfortune, we should *aim at perfection in all our works*, as the scripture recommends, Eccles. c. xxxiii. v. 23. We should consider attentively what spirit it is that moves us, what it is we do, and for whom we do it. We should begin each day with an oblation of ourselves to God, direct all our actions to his greater honour and glory, and from time to time renew our intentions of performing them with a view and desire of pleasing him ; we should shut our eyes against all human respect, and raise our hearts and thoughts to Heaven in the course of the day, and then if vain glory should happen to come and claim a part of what we do, we may say with St. Bernard, *You come too late, all is already given to God ; I neither began for your sake, nor will I leave off for your sake.*

Tertullian informs us, that the primitive Christians were accustomed to sign themselves with the sign of the Cross at the beginning of each work they undertook, and to offer it to the honour and glory of God, in the name of Jesus Christ; to signify thereby, that they performed all their actions in his name, and in conjunction with his sufferings and laborious life here on earth, in hopes of finding acceptance with God the Father through his beloved Son Jesus, and rendering their own works valuable and meritorious in his sight, by being united to his infinite merits; for, as the Scripture says, *There is no other name given to men under Heaven by which we can be saved; neither is there salvation in any other*, Acts, c. iv. v. 12. Whatever we do independently of him, however laudable it may appear in the eyes of the world, cannot contribute towards our eternal salvation; for nothing can be conducive in any degree towards it but through the merits of Christ, which are applied to our souls only by his grace. *We are not sufficient*, says St. Paul, 2 Cor. c. iii. v. 5. *to think any thing of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God*. Whatever progress we make in virtue or Christian perfection, flows from his mercy and grace through Jesus Christ. *It is he who worketh in us, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good pleasure*, Phil. c. ii. v. 13. *It is he who begins the good work in us, and who also perfects it*, Phil. c. i. v. 6. What we do in union with his grace, actually moving us thereto, partakes of his merits, but the moral actions that are done by the mere strength of nature do not partake of his merits, and consequently do not merit a supernatural reward, though they may receive from God some temporal recompense in this life. Hence St. Paul says, 1 Cor. c. xii. v. 3. *No man can say Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Spirit*, that is, so as to conduce to his eternal happiness; and Christ himself also says, *Without me you can do nothing*, Jo. c. x. v. 5.

However, it is certain that we may abound to every good work, 2 Cor. c. ix. v. 8. with the assistance of the actual grace of God exciting and aiding us thereto. *I can do all things in him who strengthened me*, says St. Paul, Phil. c. iv. v. 13. Though our nature has been greatly vitiated by original sin; though our service is of no manner of use to God, and cannot add the smallest mite to his happiness; though all we do is in itself contemptible, of no value, and unworthy of his acceptance, yet he is willing to reward us in the most ample manner, as if he derived some great advantage from our poor endeavours. He treats us not as servants, but as children; he knows our weakness, has compassion on our iniseries, and treats our frailties with the greatest indulgence; even when we offend him he pities and spares us, and is ready to embrace us again with open arms upon our repentance. He has the strictest right to all our works and actions; and yet such is his bounty and liberality, that he does not demand our service gratis, but solemnly engages his sacred word to

reward all that we do and suffer for his sake with *an eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. c. 4. He does not make sanctity and salvation depend solely on extraordinary and heroic exploits ; he does not say in the Gospel, you cannot be partakers of my glory unless you renounce entirely to the world ; unless you distribute all your substance to the poor ; unless you retire into the desert and practice the greatest austerities ; unless you suffer martyrdom and spill your blood for my sake. It is true we should be in a disposition of mind to do all this, if he required it ; but he takes the most easy of all virtues, and as he produced all things out of nothing, he knows how to draw the greatest merits from the most trivial services, and is willing to sanctify the smallest of our actions by his grace, and render them rewardable in his sight. The Gospel assures us, that he rewards not only those who offer their treasures, but likewise, those who contribute their mites ; it expressly declares the acceptance of the widow's mite, and says that he who gives a cup of cold water in his name and for his sake, shall be recompensed. O, my brethren, what a pleasure, what a comfort, what a happiness is it to have so merciful a God, so good a Father, so bountiful a Master to deal with, who leaves nothing unrewarded that is done for his sake and with a view of pleasing him ? Though of ourselves we are *unprofitable servants to him, even after doing all that is commanded*, as the Scripture speaks, Luke, c. xvii. v. 10. yet we may become *profitable servants to ourselves* at a very easy rate. There is not an action, of itself so inconsiderable, but we may render available to our salvation, by undertaking it in God's name and referring it to his honour and glory. Even the most ordinary actions of human life, such as eating and drinking, may by this means be changed into Christian virtues, and entitled to a reward. Hence the Apostle gives us the following advice : *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever else ye do in word or in work, do all things for the glory of God, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Coloss. c. iii. v. 17. To act thus in his name, to unite in spirit with him, and to have his glory and honour at heart in all that we do, is the surest and shortest way to store up valuable treasures for our souls in the kingdom of Heaven upon the most easy terms. There is not a day, nor an hour in the day, but we may, in our respective states, offer up pleasing sacrifices to God, and discharge the functions of the holy and royal priesthood, which belongs to all the faithful according to these words of St. Peter, 1 Ep. c. ii. v. 5. *You are an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*. The ecclesiastic in discharging the duties of his ministry, the master in his family, the artist and tradesman in their shop, the servant and labourer at their work, meet with a thousand opportunities of merit, and have it in their power to offer constant sacrifices of their own will, their own liberty, their

own ease, their own repose and convenience. Did they but avail themselves of the daily occasions they have to practice the excellent virtues of humility, patience, charity, justice, fidelity, obedience and submission to the will of God, who placed them in the station they fill, what a fund of merit would they acquire, what an ample provision would they lay up for a happy eternity? How easily would they enhance the value of the ordinary actions and employments of each day? How speedily would they enrich their souls, and purchase a seat of glory hereafter? The pains they undergo, the hardships and difficulties they have to encounter, the losses and crosses, the mortifications, contradictions and disappointments they meet at home and abroad, would become pledges of immortality and so many seeds of life everlasting, were they borne with patience and resignation, and duly offered to God in the spirit of penance; but for want of being referred thus to him they often remain fruitless, and resemble a hidden treasure, that turns to little or no account to the owner for want of a little care and good management on his part.

As to servants, workmen and the laborious poor, who compose the bulk and generality of mankind, nothing but a supine neglect of their salvation can hinder them from practising this easy and beneficial method of sanctifying their servile works and toilsome employments. Great numbers of them are slaves and drudges from the cradle to the coffin; their life in itself is more painful and more austere than the life of many who are shut up in cloisters; they are ill fed, poorly clothed, and exposed to the inclemency of the weather and to the rigours of the seasons; they work hard and labour in the sweat of their brow for the subsistence of a short life in this world, without partaking of any considerable share of its comforts and conveniencies. The hardships they undergo, and the fatigues, distresses, afflictions and poverty they endure, are capable of being sanctified and made means to obtain life everlasting; and yet they often turn to no account or advantage to their souls, for want of being offered to God and borne patiently in the spirit of penance; so that labouring hard the whole year, they have all they can expect here when they receive their poor wages, and they are entitled to no recompense hereafter, because they spend their sweat and spirits in labouring without any reference to God, and act only out of custom, human respect, and principles merely natural. *They have sowed much*, says the Prophet Aggæus, *and brought in little*, c. i. v. 6. *They labour all night and take nothing*, or reap no spiritual advantage from their labour, because they neither labour for God nor with God; nay, what is still more deplorable, many of them have reason to apprehend, that after having had a kind of purgatory here on earth they will have a hell hereafter, on account of the detestable habits of cursing, swearing, blaspheming, drunkenness, filch-

ing and stealing, to which the lower orders are unhappily addicted, and which they will not suffer themselves to be prevailed on to renounce.

What a melancholy reflection is this, my brethren? Is it not a pity that Christians, created for Heaven, shall thus lose the merit of all their hardships, toils and fatigues, and run the risk of becoming slaves to Satan in flames for all eternity after having been poor slaves and drudges in this life? By regulating their conduct, and bearing the sufferings and distresses annexed to their state with patience, due reference and submission to the will of God, who after the fall of Adam enjoined labour on mankind as a penance due to sin, they would make a virtue of necessity, and bid fair for a more exalted seat in the kingdom of Heaven than will fall to the lot of those who are placed in a more exalted station in this world. Their hardships would be sweetened, their pains would be doubly rewarded, and whilst their hands are employed at their daily labour, and earning an honest livelihood for the support of their bodies, they would earn a never-fading Crown of Glory for their souls. O almighty and eternal God, give us grace to serve thee in our respective states with zeal and fidelity, and to improve the time of our mortal pilgrimage in this vale of misery to the best advantage, that our days may be filled with good works when the night of death comes, in which no one can labour. Grant, we beseech thee, that through the infinite merits of our blessed Redeemer we may then find acceptance with thee, and be entitled to hear these words of comfort, *Well done thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*, Matt. c. xxv. v. 23. Which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Difference between True and False Virtue.

Nisi abundaverit Justitia vestra plusquam Scribarum et Phariseorum, non intrabitis in Regnum Cœlorum.

Mat. c. v. v. 20.

Unless your Justice abounds more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Mat. c. v. v. 20.

NOTHING is more dangerous than to disguise the venom of a false doctrine, and the disorders of a criminal conduct, under

the outward appearance of truth and the veil of an eminent sanctity. Our Divine Redeemer has taken care to caution us both against the one and the other; he bids us *to beware of false prophets, who come under the clothing of sheep, but inwardly are ravenous wolves*, intent only on the seduction and ruin of the flock. They intrude themselves into the ministry without any lawful mission, and endeavour, under the specious pretext of retrenching abuses, to surprize the simple and the unwary by their captious speeches, and to impose on them by their fallacious appearances. *By their fruits ye shall know them*, says our Blessed Saviour, Mat. c. vii. v. 15. In the Gospel of this day he also forewarns us against the false justice and hypocrisy of those dissemblers, who, like unto the Scribes and Pharisees conceal a depraved heart under the cloak of piety, and wish to pass in the eyes of the world for what they really are not in the sight of God. The Scribes were Doctors of the Jewish Law; they *sat on the chair of Moses*, and therefore Christ ordered the people to follow their doctrine and to *do as they said, but not to follow their example or do as they did*, Mat. c. xxiii. The Pharisees were so called, as St. Epiphanius remarks, from dividing or separating themselves from the rest of the people, and pretending to observe the Law with greater exactness; nothing was more reserved or composed than their exterior; one would be apt to imagine that they might be proposed as models of piety and patterns of virtue, if the all-seeing Searcher of hearts had not pronounced the sentence of their condemnation, and expressly declared that unless you be more just, more perfect and more virtuous than they were, you shall be excluded from the kingdom of Heaven. Your eternal salvation, therefore, depending hereon, it is highly incumbent on you to know in what particulars the virtues of the Scribes and Pharisees were defective, and in what degree of justice and perfection you are obliged to surpass them, that you may carefully avoid the rocks on which they unhappily split, and abound in the justice wherein they failed. This is the important subject which I intend to lay before you in the following discourse, wherein I shall briefly point out the difference between true and false virtue, and endeavour to excite you to the love and pursuit of the one, and to a dislike and aversion to the other. Let us previously invoke the light of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, greeting her for this purpose with the words of the Arch-angel Gabriel. *Ave Maria.*

As the most brilliant gold is not always the most pure, so in like manner, the most shining virtue is not always the most perfect, nor the most acceptable in the sight of God, who regards our hearts, and the inward dispositions of our souls, more than our outward works and actions. He often condemns the hearts of those, whose actions the world admires, and reproves as false justice and disguised pride those very virtues which seem brightest in the eyes of men. Whatever exterior homage

we pay unto him must be enlivened by the interior spirit, and accompanied with the inward affections and worship of the heart; for if the heart does not concur, and join in the interior sentiments and worship with the exterior performance, instead of being a true homage, it is to be deemed no better than an empty sign and shadow of religion, like unto the external performances of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were apparently zealous in the service of God, and regular in the observance of the outward practices of religion, but neglected the interior and more essential duties. Hence our Blessed Saviour reprov'd all this outward show and glittering appearance of virtue as false, counterfeit and defective. *You hypocrites*, said he to them, Mat. c. xv. v. 7. *Well did Isaias prophesy of you, saying this people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* His charity and zeal for the conversion of their souls, prompted him to reprehend them severely for their defects, and to inveigh constantly against their false virtues in order to make them enter into themselves, and hinder them from seducing others. He has left nothing painted in more lively colours in the Gospel than the picture he has drawn of them in St. Matthew, c. xxiii. where he exhibits a frightful view of their spiritual disorders for our instruction, that by way of contrast, true virtue may appear in its genuine beauty, and be the more easily distinguished and reduced to practice, without giving into the impressions of a mistaken piety, or the wild imaginations of a false devotion.

It is evident from the character that Christ our Lord has given of these pretended saints and false devout, that hypocrisy, or a dissimulation and sanctity, was one of their capital faults; they recited long prayers, observed rigorous fasts, gave alms in abundance, and practised many excellent acts of virtue in outward appearance. Were we as exemplary and edifying in our deportment and exterior conduct, as liberal in the distribution of alms, as addicted to prayer and as observant of our other religious duties as they were, we would be apt to think ourselves sure of our salvation; and yet it is certain, that unless we surpass them in virtue *we shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.* It is not sufficient to do what is good in itself, but it must be done with a good intention; for it is the intention that generally stamps the character of virtue or vice on our actions. Had the Scribes and Pharisees acted upon proper motives and with a pure intention, the good works they performed might have entitled them to an eternal reward, but they acted upon selfish motives of human respect, and with a view of being esteemed and applauded by the world, and therefore Christ told them that they received their desired reward in this life, and that they were entitled to no other recompense in the next life but that of hypocrites, *weeping and gnashing of teeth.* The sin of hypocrisy, which is the unhappy offspring of pride and vain-glory, ran universally through all their actions, and tainted

them in their very root; it poisoned their very best works, ruined all their virtues, and destroyed their whole merit. When they prayed, they chose thoroughfares and public places for this purpose, that people passing by might see and take notice of them. When they distributed alms to the poor, they caused a trumpet to sound before them, that every one might be informed of their charitable dispositions. When they fasted, they put on an air of sadness, disfigured their faces, and affected to look pale, that the world might entertain a favourable opinion of the rigour and austerity of their fasts. Our Blessed Saviour who perfectly knew the malice of every sin, with its fatal influences and consequences, seems to warn us in the Gospel, against no one crime in nature more frequently than against vain-glory, and its usual attendant, hypocrisy, as it is under the shelter of this most pernicious weed that all vices grow, and every virtue is blasted. *Beware, says he, Luke, c. xii. v. 1, of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy; and Mat. c. vi. v. i. Take care not to perform your justice before men, that you may be seen of them; otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father who is in Heaven. And that the light which is in us may not be darkness, he orders us to pray in private, when we pray in particular, and when we give alms, not to let the left hand know what the right hand gives; and when we fast, to anoint our head and wash our face, that is, to rectify our intention, to purify our hearts and discharge every duty with a sincere and effectual desire to obey, please and glorify the Lord our God, who sees us in private, and will reward us in public, provided we make his honour and glory our last end, and the ruling principle of all our good actions.*

Another capital vice that Christ reproached the Pharisees with, was their want of fraternal charity, and their rash censorious disposition to judge and condemn others without sufficient grounds. They had so presumptuous an opinion of their own imaginary excellence, that they looked down with scorn and contempt upon their neighbour, and were so quick-sighted as to discern *a mote in his eye*, Mat. c. vii. v. 3. at the same time that they did not perceive *a beam in their own eyes*; that is, they censured his lesser failings, and even misconstrued his innocent actions, but were blind to their own greater faults, and overlooked the malice and corruption that their hearts were filled with. They separated themselves from infidels and publicans, as from persons that were unworthy even to touch their garments, and observed with the utmost punctuality and exactness certain ceremonies, such as washing their hands before meat, and the like, but failed in the observance of the indispensable duties of charity and brotherly love, *straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel*, Mat. c. xxiii. that is, observing the law in matters of little consequence, whilst they transgressed its most weighty and essential precepts without remorse. He therefore compared them to *whitened sepulchres, which are fair without,*

and appear beautiful to men, but are foul within and full of all corruption; for, in like manner they appeared outwardly just to men, but within were full of hypocrisy and palliated a large stock of pride, envy, jealousy, disdain and contempt of others, under the cover of sanctity and the mask of an apparent piety.

Is not this, my brethren, a natural picture of the conduct of several persons of our days, who deceive themselves with the empty shadow of virtue, and neglect the substance? If we confront their lives with the lives of the Pharisees, what a near resemblance shall we discover between them? How many will you find, in the very midst of Christianity, whose lives are a strange medley of real sins and counterfeit virtues? They stumble at straws and leap over blocks; they scruple trifles, and violate the most important duties with little or no remorse; they tremble at phantoms, and despise realities; they are exact and formal, even to a nicety, in performing certain works of supererogation, which they impose on themselves, or have a relish for, and they overlook the great precepts of charity and brotherly love without any concern; they refrain their hands from gross crimes of a scandalous nature, that would reflect dishonour on them in the eyes of the world, but they pay no attention to their interior, which is full of poison and deadly corruption; they carry a fair outside, but make no account of indulging evil thoughts and desires, of entertaining resentments and animosities, of forming rash judgments and groundless suspicions of their neighbour, and harbouring hatred, envy, malice and revenge in their hearts. They will sometimes spend whole hours in running over a number of vocal prayers and customary devotions in the morning, and employ the remainder of the day in defaming a neighbour and blackening his character with vile calumnies and detractions; they appear to be models of piety in the house of God, but upon the least cross they meet with, or the smallest contradiction that thwarts their inclinations, they abandon themselves to the sallies of their passions, and become sour, peevish, ill-humoured, impatient, and intolerable in their family at home. They have hearts of flint when the cries of the poor resound in their ears; they think nothing of stopping the wages of a servant, of depriving the honest tradesman of his due, of wronging the helpless widow and the fatherless orphan, of refusing to pay their lawful debts, and make restitution of what they unjustly acquired and as unjustly possess. What is this else, my brethren, but pharisaical piety and false virtue? This is what made St. Jerom cry out and say, *Wo be to us Christians, who are so unfortunate as to inherit the vices of the Pharisees!* The dreadful menaces which the Gospel thunders out against them, should deter us from following their example, and should inspire us with an utter aversion to their hypocrisy, pride and arrogance, vain-glory and ostentation.

Before all things, we must keep the commandments of God, and discharge the essential duties of charity and justice, in preference to any work of supererogation. We are to be punctual and faithful even in little things. *These we ought to do*, says our Saviour, Luke, c. xi. v. 42. *and not leave great and weighty things undone.* We are to comply with our religious duties, and fulfil all the obligations of our respective states and conditions of life with such an outward decency as may give edification to all that see us. We are to encourage each other mutually to virtue by the light of our good example; for Christ orders us to *let our light shine before men*; but then our last end in all things must be, *that our Father, who is in Heaven, may be glorified thereby.* He regards the motive and intention upon which we act more than the action, and requires us to be as strictly virtuous in his sight as we appear in the eyes of the world to be. His holy will is to be always the rule of our conduct; He only must be adored and worshipped in the temple of our souls; no idol of pride, or vain-glory, must be suffered to stand on the altar of our hearts, or to share in the honour that is due to him alone. To seek ourselves, or Pharisee-like, to court the esteem and applause of the world in the performance of our spiritual and devotional exercises, is the ready way to destroy their merit, and to forfeit the Crown that Christ has promised to his faithful servants; since, as St. Paul speaks in his Epistle to the Galatians, *Were I to study to please men, I would not be the servant of Christ.* And, really, nothing is more unworthy a rational being, nothing more unbecoming a Christian, than to labour for the applause of the world and the encomiums of men, which cannot add a single grain to his merit, when he may acquire an eternal recompense from God by labouring for his honour and glory. Is not the esteem and empty applause of men too small a reward for a virtuous action? What can be more precarious, more inconstant, or more capricious, since those who love, esteem and praise us to-day, may hate, undervalue and decry us to-morrow? A false report, a mere groundless fancy, a casual indiscretion, is sufficient to rob a man in an instant of all the esteem and popular applause he has been labouring to acquire for a series of years.

The truly virtuous Christian, like unto the Apostle, sets no great value on the judgments of men; he seeks his happiness, and the recompense of his good works, only in God, and looks for nothing beyond him. *Where his treasure is, there also is his heart*, Mat. c. vi. v. 21. and the mark he constantly aims at, is this motto of St. Ignatius, *To the greater glory of God.* He amasses spiritual treasures for his soul, which neither the moth of vain-glory, nor the worm of pride, nor the rust of any criminal passion can consume, corrode or eat up, because he takes care to resist their suggestions, and to practice this short lesson

which Jesus Christ prescribes in the Gospel, *Learn from me to be meek and humble of heart.* He is convinced that humility is the basis, the guardian, and, as St. Augustine calls it, the fortress and the citadel of every virtue. It cherishes, preserves, and secures the other virtues; for, as natural fire is preserved under ashes, so the supernatural fire of charity, attended with the whole train of the other virtues, is never more safe or better secured than when it is hidden under the ashes of a profound humility. Herein consists the difference between charity and humility. *Charity covers a multitude of sins*, 1 Pet. c. iv. Humility covers and hides a multitude of virtues which accompany it, and secures them from all imminent dangers; without it, no virtue can be acceptable in the sight of God; it is the first, the second, and the third degree to raise us to glory, as St. Augustine says. If it does not precede the other virtues to prepare us for them; if it does not accompany them to sanctify them; if it does not follow them to preserve them, we will lose the fruit and benefit of them. It was the want of humility that rendered the virtues of the Pharisees so defective, and deprived them of the benefit of all their outward works of piety and devotion. Their misfortune should be a warning to us to practice what they were deficient in, and to keep at the greatest distance from the vices for which they were reprov'd.

O sweet Jesus, grant us this grace, we most humbly beseech thee. Thou hast taught us humility by thy word; thou hast taught us humility by thy example. O may we imitate thee by humbling ourselves here on earth, that we may be found worthy on the last day to be exalted to the kingdom of Heaven, and to inherit those never-fading Crowns of Glory which thou hast prepared for thy faithful servants. And which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Christian Temperance and Sobriety.

Accipiens septem panes, et gratias agens, fregit et dabat Discipulis suis ut apponerent.

Marc. c. viii. v. 6.

Jesus taking the seven loaves and giving thanks, he broke and gave them to his Disciples to set before the multitude.

Mark, c. viii. v. 6.

WE read in this day's Gospel that a great multitude of people, consisting of about four thousand persons, having fol-

lowed our Divine Redeemer into the desert with an ardent desire of hearing the word of God, exposed themselves by their zeal to the danger of fainting in the way with hunger, as they were fasting after the fatigues of a long and painful journey of three days, and were not provided with the common necessities of life, having no more than seven loaves and a few little fishes among them all; a small pittance for four thousand people! But he who embraces all mankind with the tenderness of a father, and who drew the universe out of nothing by his almighty power, took care to provide for the subsistence of their bodies, after he had nourished their souls with the spiritual food of his heavenly doctrine; for he multiplied the loaves and fishes in such a manner, that seven baskets were filled with the fragments which remained, after the whole multitude had eaten as much as satisfied their appetite. This illustrious miracle affords us several excellent lessons concerning Christian temperance, one of the four cardinal virtues, which are so called from a Latin word that signifies a *hinge*, because they are, as it were, the hinges on which all the moral virtues of a Christian life chiefly depend. St. Gregory the Great, speaking of the duties of Christian temperance, remarks three great disorders with regard to the nourishment of the body, which it is the duty of temperance to retrench and rectify. First, a servile attachment to the body. Secondly, excessive repletion and surfeiting. Thirdly, an over-great anxiety and solicitude in procuring nice and delicate meats. The principal function of temperance is to govern, regulate, and subject the body to the spirit, in order to subject the spirit the more easily to God. For this end, it moderates that inordinate affection which makes a man in some measure a slave to his body. Secondly, it restrains our sensual appetites from brutal excesses, hinders us from surpassing the bounds of want, and makes us rest contented with what is necessary for our support. Thirdly, it retrenches all delicacy in seeking nice and exquisite meats to please and gratify the palate, nothing being more contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, and to that obligation which it enjoins to lead a penitential life, and mortify the flesh with its vices and concupiscences. These disorders, which occur so frequently in the use of that food, which the bountiful Author of nature has created for our necessary support, and intended for our relief, are pointed out to us in this day's Gospel, and therefore I shall make them the subject of the following discourse. In the first place, I will shew you what defects and abuses we are to avoid in the refection of our bodies; and in the second you shall see what sanctity this refection is susceptible of, and by what means it may be purified and perfected. Let us previously invoke the aid of the Divine Spirit, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, &c. *Ave Maria.*

Experience convinces us, that there is no action of human life more liable to great abuses and disorders than the nourish-

ment of our bodies, by which nature endeavours to repair its weakened force, but by which passion, instead of confining itself within the bounds of necessity, abandons itself to the most shameful and the most scandalous excesses in point of eating and drinking. Christ was willing to correct those excesses, by giving us a shining example of temperance, in the great miracle he wrought in the Gospel of this day. He nourished and fed a numerous multitude of people; but before all things he disengaged them from being too solicitous about the support of their bodies, by taking them into a solitary place into a barren desert, destitute of all human relief and unprovided with the common necessities of life; he gave them no corporal nourishment until they were hungry, and stood in need of being refreshed. In fine, he furnished them with no nice or delicate meats, dressed out in the most exquisite manner for the purpose of pleasing the palate, but supplied them with plain, common food, fit only to repel hunger, namely, a few little fishes and bread. Let us observe all the circumstances of this grand miracle, and consider how surprising it was to see so many thousands of men running after our Divine Redeemer, and marching into a frightful solitude without succours, without provisions, without thinking of their corporal wants, or being disheartened at the barrenness of the place or the difficulty of the road. O what a difference was there between this pious multitude, which followed the Son of God with so much resolution and so much constancy, and those ancient Jews who formerly followed Moses into the deserts of Palestine? Scarce had the latter opened their eyes to observe the journey, which their Legislator and Leader pointed out to them, when they began to cry out and murmur against him; a criminal diffidence seized and possessed their hearts; the meats of Egypt came incessantly into their memory, and in vain did Moses work so many prodigies to animate them; in vain did he break the waves of the sea, and sweeten its bitterness; in vain did he draw fountains of water out of the rock by a stroke of his rod. These carnal men would not be content till they were glutted. Always taken up with the thoughts of their belly, they cried out, *Exod. c. xvi. We wish we had remained till death closed our eyes in the place of our exile, where we had bread in abundance.* But, alas! their gluttony, their sensuality, their thirst after the flesh-pots of Egypt, soon drew down the vengeance of Heaven upon them in the desert. It was their servile attachment to their belly that brought them to the shameful crime of idolatry, and made them adore the golden calf; it was their intemperance in eating and drinking that caused the anger of God to descend upon them, and to destroy several thousands of them *whilst the food was yet in their mouths*, as the Scripture expresses it.

Such was the greediness of that sensual nation, and such, alas! is the conduct of many Christians of our days, who, as

St. Paul remonstrated to the Philippians, live like apostates and enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ. Men delivered up to their senses, immersed in flesh and blood, idolaters of themselves, who have no other end to expect but eternal perdition, because they make a God of their belly, and have no other thought, no other view, no other occupation, but to nourish and fatten their bodies, and to lead a carnal, sensual, luxurious and epicurean life. How many are there to be found amongst them, who, far from forgetting their corporal wants, as the pious multitude did in this day's Gospel, to come and hear Jesus Christ in the person of his ministers, shamefully break the most solemn fasts of the Church, and neglect every opportunity of sanctifying their souls, for the sake of a party of pleasure? How many who abandon all the exercises of piety on Sundays, and on the greatest festivals in the year, rather than drop the least opportunity of making good cheer, and indulging and gratifying their senses? What else is this, my brethren, but to resemble the children of Israel, who preferred the leeks and onions of Egypt to the manna from Heaven? What else is it but to imitate Esau, who forfeited his inheritance for a dish of lentils, and sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage? It is evident that nothing is more opposite to the spirit of the Gospel, which almost in every page inculcates the indispensable obligation of doing penance, of curbing and restraining our sensual appetites, of denying ourselves, of retrenching all superfluities, of living soberly, justly and piously, and of bearing a resemblance of the mortification of Jesus in our mortal flesh.

All the saints of the new Testament, convinced hereof, practised the most rigorous austerities, and spent their days in the most laborious exercises of penance and self-denial, without allowing themselves any farther relaxation than was absolutely necessary to support life. St. Bernard, as the history of his life relates, was accustomed to have recourse to food as to medicine, for the preservation of his health. St. Augustine, after his conversion, was so nice in this point, that, as we read in the Book of his Confessions, it was a pain to him to eat or drink, lest he should be led astray by the stream of concupiscence, and fall into the least intemperance under the veil of necessity. Our Blessed Saviour took care to forewarn us against this evil, saying, Luke, c. xxi. *Look well to yourselves, and be upon your guard, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting.* It was for this reason that he made no provision for the four thousand men who had followed him in the desert, until he found them pinched with hunger, and under a necessity of taking food, *lest they should faint in the way.* He could have prevented this want; he could have furnished them with food in abundance, as his almighty power had furnished the Israelites in the desert with manna and fowl from Heaven; but he waited until they were in necessity, to give us

to understand, as St. Basil observes, that necessity alone ought to be our rule when we intend to give nourishment to our bodies, and not sensuality, greediness, or a blind voracious appetite, which is not easily satisfied when way is once given to it. Nature itself requires no more than what it precisely wants; it is content with what is necessary for our support, and an immoderate use of meat and drink serves only to depress and overwhelm it. Thousands have impaired their health, shortened their lives, and brought themselves to an untimely end by gluttony; nay, it is written that gluttony has destroyed more than the sword, inasmuch as it engenders, feeds and fomented an abundance of superfluous and noxious humours, which, settled in the body, give rise to the numberless diseases that hurry millions into the other world. Nothing, on the contrary, is more conducive to health than a regimen of life; nothing more serviceable to the body than a regular diet; nothing more salutary or more powerful to prevent and remove corporal distempers than Christian temperance; it is the physician of the soul as well as of the body, the support of old age, and the surest means to re-establish a broken constitution; for it has been often proved by experience, that temperance has cured diseases which obstinately defied all the power of the strongest medicines, and it is well known that the ancient Patriarchs and Recluses, by leading an abstemious and temperate life, prolonged their days to a surprising old age.

The very Pagans themselves, as Arnobius, a celebrated writer, informs us, were so sensible of the salutary effects of temperance and of the many dismal consequences of intemperance, that they were accustomed to place their idols at their tables, in public view of the guests they had invited, that the sight of them might serve to prevent the company from falling into any criminal excesses, and to keep them within the limits of a just moderation. Whosoever cast his eyes on these false divinities became more circumspect and more reserved in eating and drinking before them, it being deemed then a kind of sacrilege to dishonour the presence of their idols by any intemperance or indecent behaviour. What a lesson is this for Christians? Imaginary gods inspired the greatest libertines with a respectful fear, and deterred them from giving into excess, and shall Christians pay no attention or regard to the presence of the true and living God? Ah! my brethren, says St. John Chrysostom, let Jesus Christ assist at all your entertainments; let him be one of your guests; let him hold the first place; let him receive all the honours of your table; let him preside at all your recreations and have a share in them. If you follow this rule, gluttony and drunkenness will be banished from your houses; voluptuousness and licentiousness will be eliminated; immodest discourses, double entendres, and lapped-up speeches, with which the tables of Christians are so often profaned, will be no more the favourite topic of conversation; and instead of

staining the character of such as are absent, either by railery or detraction, as is but too frequently the case, your tables will be sanctified, and your entertainments will be seasoned with an edifying conversation. Such was the advice, such was the practice of the great St. Augustine. He caused two verses to be written at the head of his table, forbidding there all kinds of detraction and immoral conversation, and he ordered a book of piety to be always read to his guests whilst they were eating their meats and taking their repasts, to the end that their souls might be spiritually nourished at the same time that they were feeding their bodies with corporal food.

It is thus my brethren, that we may perfect and sanctify the care of feeding the body; for though it be one of the grossest actions of human life, and common to us with the beasts, which should contribute very much to humble the pride of man, yet it may become altogether holy, altogether supernatural and meritorious, by being duly referred to God's honour and glory, and performed with a pure intention of pleasing and obeying him. For this end we must take our meals, not for the gratification of a sensual appetite, but as a remedy for corporal weakness, for the necessary support of nature, and for the preservation of our being, which we are commanded to preserve until it shall please the Sovereign Lord of life and death to put a final period to our mortal existence. This must be our leading principle when we have recourse to food, according to the advice of the Apostle, and according to the model prescribed by our Saviour in this day's Gospel. *Taking the seven loaves, says the Evangelist, he blessed them, and returned thanks to his Heavenly Father,* whereby he elevated this human action above its ordinary level, and raised it to a supernatural degree. This is the model, according to which we ought to regulate ourselves and sanctify our tables. In imitation of the Son of God, we are to lift up our hearts, our eyes and our hands to Heaven, to honour our Sovereign Lord and bountiful Creator, who vouchsafes to provide for our support and preservation. Whenever we make use of those things his providence has sent for our nourishment, it is but just that we should receive them from his hands with respect, with gratitude, with love and thanksgiving.

St. Ambrose remarks, that the two disciples whom our Blessed Saviour met on the way to the castle of Emmaus, knew him *in the breaking of bread*, and this because, according to his usual custom, he blessed the bread before he eat of it. It is by this same ceremony, says the Holy Doctor, that Christ always knew and knows as yet his true disciples. Are you willing, then, to act as true disciples and faithful servants of Jesus Christ? *Whether ye eat or drink, you are to do all for the honour and glory of God, and to receive all things from his holy hand with thanksgiving; for it is the height of ingra-*

titude to partake of his gifts, and to enjoy his blessings without a proper acknowledgment.

But why do we bless the meat we make use of ? demands St. John Chrysostom. Is it unclean in itself ? No, my Brethren, answers this holy Doctor, but we who make use of it are unclean. What I fear, O Lord, says St. Augustine, is not the uncleanness of the meat, because I know it comes from thee, but I fear my own uncleanness, and for this reason, I always begin by prayer. By this I acknowledge it to be the gift of thy hands, that thou art the author of it, and that I hold it from thee. Receiving it thus, I receive it with respect, with gratitude, with love, and by this means I purify my soul. The food which is thus received, is also *sanctified by the word of God*, as St. Paul says, 1 Tim. c. 4. It is sanctified by the blessing and thanksgiving which ought to be always given before and after meals, in imitation of the primitive Christians, who, since the earliest years of Christianity, were always accustomed to observe this pious practice most religiously. They not only make themselves known as Christians in celebrating the divine mysteries, in partaking of the body and blood of Christ, and in hearing his holy word, but they also sanctified their tables as well as their sacrifice ; they praised and glorified God's holy name, not only in the Temple, but likewise in their pious assemblies, and at the repasts where they eat together and enjoyed themselves in the Lord with modesty and reservedness ; they took the necessary support of nature with a pure intention, in obedience to the will of God, and as a medicine for the preservation of health, seasoning it with the remembrance of the gall and vinegar that our Blessed Saviour was presented with at the time of his passion. Behold an excellent pattern for us to copy after, and a lesson that is sufficient to confound many Christians of our days, who scarce allow themselves a passing reflection on the goodness of their bountiful Creator, when they sit down to their meals, and who shew so much delicacy in the choice of their food, and commit such excess in the use of it, that they defeat the very purposes for which nourishment should be taken, by impairing the health which it was designed to preserve.

Another instruction our Saviour gives us in the Gospel of this day is, to feed the poor with the leavings of our tables. He ordered his disciples to gather the fragments that remained, as the Evangelist informs us, after the had eaten of the food miraculously multiplied, to give the rich to understand that the poor ought to be fed and supported with the superfluities of their tables. This is not only their duty but their interest, for *the alms which they hide in the bosom of the poor*, will accompany them to the bar of divine justice and stand *their best friends in the day of need ; when all other things fail them*, the charities they have distributed will plead their

cause, and the distressed objects they have relieved will intercede for them like so many powerful advocates before the throne of God, and procure them admittance into the eternal tabernacles of bliss. Hence our Blessed Saviour desires us to *make to ourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity*, and to gain over the poor on our side by plentiful alms. Hence also the Royal Prophet says, Ps. xl. *Blessed is the man who considers the necessities of the poor, and relieves them; the Lord will treat him mildly and sweetly in the evil day.* The Sovereign Judge of the living and the dead will then regard whatever charities are extended for his sake to his little ones here on earth as given to himself, and reward them accordingly. On the contrary, whatever is uncharitably refused to his little ones in the hour of their distress, he will look upon as refused to himself in person; he will then shut the bowels of his infinite mercy against those who shut the bowels of their charity and compassion against their necessitous brethren, who bear the image and character of his divinity. It was for this reason that the rich glutton mentioned in the Gospel *was buried in hell*; he was cast into eternal flames, and refused a drop of cold water to cool his tongue, because he had refused the crumbs that fell from his table to poor Lazarus, who was perishing at his gate with hunger whilst he was feasting sumptuously, and enjoying the comforts and pleasures of life with the accomplices of his debauchery. His misfortune ought to be a warning to us all, not only to be merciful and charitable to the poor according to our abilities, but also to lead a sober and temperate life.

As to the sin of drunkenness, it would be a difficult task to sum up all the evils that it is productive of, or to relate the long train of misfortunes that flow from this poisonous source. Not to speak of the scandal that the drunkard gives, by living a reproach to his religion and a disgrace to Christianity, there is no vice that degrades him more from the honour of human nature, or that renders him more universally contemptible; there is no crime that reduces him nearer to the low rank, base condition, and similitude of the beasts of the field; nay, he exceeds them in brutality, for they do not fall into such infamous excesses, and if they are not temperate by reason and by virtue, they are so at least by an instinct of nature; but the drunkard is neither conducted by this instinct, nor does he govern himself according to the dictates of right reason, and consequently he is not temperate either one way or the other. Ungrateful to his Creator, who vouchsafed to distinguish him by the noble faculty of reason, he debases himself to the last degree; he clouds his understanding, confuses his judgment, stupifies his mind, and renders himself unfit for every religious duty, and fit for nothing but for the drudgery of the devil. Moreover, the drunkard shortens his own days, and murders himself by inches; for excessive drinking,

particularly of raw drams and intoxicating spirits, impairs the health, and brings on a thousand dreadful disorders which emaciate the body, overthrow the most excellent constitution, and gradually put a period to its existence. Hence some learned writers of the medical faculty do not hesitate to assert, that the drinking of spirituous liquors has killed as many thousands as there are stars in the sky, and that more have died by this slow but sure poison, than by any other kind of poison whatsoever; for which reason they tell us, that the following epitaph might be justly inscribed on the tomb of every notorious drunkard: *Here lies a self-murderer.* What then must we think of the unhappy man or woman who, for some successive years, is taking the utmost pains to accomplish such a desperate act of suicide, and to anticipate the period of his or her existence? St. Paul replies, that such persons entail damnation on their souls, and that they shall be cut off from the inheritance of the kingdom of God, Galat. c. v. v. 21. What, alas! have such people therefore to expect when a sudden death seizes them in a state of intoxication, in the very act of mortal sin, but the eternal torments of hell, which are due to final impenitence?

O my brethren, let me entreat you by the bowels of Jesus Christ to beware of such dreadful evils. Harken to the voice of the Apostle, Rom. c. xiii. Harken to these words, which formerly made a deep impression on the mind of St. Augustine, and contributed to his conversion: *Let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and emulation; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts.* Give us grace, O Lord, to practice the rules and maxims of thy Gospel. Grant that we may be sober and temperate at all our repasts. Grant that we may not abuse thy gifts and blessings to our own destruction. Preserve us from ever falling into any criminal excesses. Strengthen us against all temptations, and make us truly sensible of the dangers which are before us, that we may avoid the snares of our mortal enemy; who, *like a roaring lion is seeking an opportunity to devour us*, and that we may secure to ourselves such a portion of thy grace, as will entitle us to partake one day of the eternal banquet of thy glory. Which I wish you all, my brethren, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF JUNE.

On the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

Erre magnus coram Domino.—Luc. c. i. v. 15.

He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.—St. Luke, c. i. v. 15.

THE Nativity of St. John the Baptist is celebrated with great joy and solemnity all over Christendom. This is a peculiar honour paid to him, and was foretold before he was born. *Many shall rejoice at his birth*, said the Angel of the Lord; and this prediction we see accomplished to this very day. In the veneration that the Church pays to the other saints, the day of their corporal birth is passed over in silence, as they were then *children of wrath*, under the guilt and empire of sin. The honour and respect paid to them commences only from the time of their death, on the day they departed this life, and by a spiritual nativity began a new life of glory and immortality in the kingdom of Heaven; but with regard to St. John the Baptist, the day of his corporal birth and temporal nativity on earth, has become an object of veneration. The very first moment of his appearance in the world, that moment which to the rest of mankind in general is a moment of misery and disgrace, was to him a source of immortal honour and glory, because he came into the world cleansed and purified from the stain of original sin. Even at that early period, Heaven and earth conspired to exalt his fame, and to lay a solid foundation for handing it down to the latest posterity. Angels and men considered his greatness with astonishment, and a series of wonders and prodigies accompanied and distinguished his nativity. The Angels admired a child who was adorned with graces and filled with the Holy Ghost, at a period when other children are defiled with sin, and consequently enemies of God and confederates of hell. Men, considering that he is born of a barren mother, and of a father advanced in years, and that many illustrious miracles are wrought at his birth, openly declare that *the hand of the Lord is with him*, and cry out with admiration, *What do you think this child shall be!*

God alone can answer this question; the eternal Father replies by the Prophet Malachy, *that he will be his Angel, whom he is to send before the face of his Son to prepare the way before him.* The Son answers, *that he will be more than a Prophet, and that there has not risen any one greater than him among the born of women.* The Holy Ghost, speaking by the organ of Isaias, as-

tures us that *he will be the voice of one crying in the desert, the voice of the God of magnificence and power, that breaks the cedars of Libanus.* Human eloquence would be presumptuous, if it added any thing to these divine encomiums. As the hand of the Lord, that is, the infinite virtue of his providence, is occupied in a particular manner in working wonders for the perfection of this child, so his adorable mouth employs its divine eloquence in explaining them to us. Let us then hearken; the panegyric of St. John is complete, and all the praises we can give him are briefly comprised in these three words, *Magnus coram Domino: He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.* Other Saints are distinguished by certain characteristical privileges, but he excelled in graces, and was enriched with all the perfections that became the exalted dignity to which he was raised. He was a Doctor, a Prophet, a Virgin, and a Martyr. To give you some idea of the principal virtues of his holy life, I shall confine myself to the leading features of his character, as faithfully drawn by the spirit of truth in the divine Scriptures, and endeavour to shew you how truly great he was in the manner he commenced, discharged, and concluded his ministry. Let us previously implore the aid of Heaven, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, whom the Angel greeted with the following words, *Ave Maria, &c.*

As God alone is great from himself, and the source of all real greatness, so nothing can be truly great and excellent in any considerable degree that does not stand in a near relation to the Divinity, or that does not flow from, and lead unto God. All human greatness can therefore be no more than a shadow of greatness. For what doth human greatness consist in? In power, which is little better than weakness; in elevation, that rises from, and terminates in dust and ashes; in riches, which are no more than gilded clay; in applause, which proceeds most commonly from adulation, is often unjustly bestowed upon the most undeserving, and vanishes away like smoke. To be great only in the eyes of men is insignificant in the last extreme; since, as the Prophet says, *All nations upon the earth are nothing in the presence of the Lord.* To be great in our own eyes is to be little and contemptible in his eyes, and to subvert the virtue of humility, which is the very basis of every true virtue and Christian perfection; but to be great in the sight of God, necessarily argues a true, solid and unquestionable greatness, as the Almighty entertains a just and clear idea of the nature and value of all things, and of the various degrees of their perfection. It was for this reason that the Angel foretold of St. John the Baptist, that *he should be great in the sight of the Lord.* His parents were Zacharias and Elizabeth, *both just in the sight of God, and walking blameless in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord,* as the Gospel tells us. The same Archangel that was sent to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to announce the birth of Jesus Christ, was sent also to Zacharias

whilst he was on a certain day offering up incense and prayers for the people in the temple of Jerusalem, to announce the birth of the Baptist. He assured him that his wife Elizabeth should bring forth a son, and even dictated the name of *John*, that was to be given him, this being a name expressive of the fullness of grace, with which he was to be replenished. He told him moreover, that this son *was to go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias*; that he should convert many of the children of Israel, turn the hearts of the incredulous, and prepare to the Lord a perfect people. Zacharias did not question the divine power, but on account of his old age he entertained some doubt concerning the accomplishment of the Angel's prediction; and was, for his incredulity, deprived of the use of his speech for the space of nine months, that is, until the birth of his son, and the day appointed for his circumcision. Then having intimated, in writing, the name that the child was to be called, according to the direction of the Angel, *his mouth was immediately opened*, and his tongue, which diffidence had tied up, being set loose, he began to proclaim the signal mercies of the Lord in profound sentiments of adoration and thanksgiving, and to declare in prophetic strains the greatness and splendor of his new-born son to the admiration of the inhabitants of the country all round. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel*, said he, *because he hath visited, and hath wrought the redemption of his people. And thou child, shall be called the Prophet of the Most High, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; to give the knowledge of salvation to his people for the remission of their sins, through the bowels of the mercy of our God.* Such was the glorious design and noble end of the high commission that this great favourite and darling of Heaven was charged with. He was chosen to be the Ambassador of the Almighty, the Angel of the Messiah, the immediate precursor of the Redeemer of mankind, who had been foretold by the Prophets, ardently longed for by the Patriarchs, and impatiently expected for many ages by all nations. He was sent before him as an heavenly messenger and herald to dispose mankind for receiving the blessings of salvation. He came to bear testimony to the immaculate Lamb of God, that was to take away the sins of the world. He came to manifest and point him out, not at a distance, nor obscurely by the shadow of types and figures, as the ancient Prophets had done; but clearly and without disguise, as being already come in human flesh, and actually present among men. For this reason, the Scripture stiles John *a Prophet, and more than a Prophet*, and says, *that there hath not risen a greater prophet among the born of women*, Luke, c. vii. v. 26, 28. which is the greatest eulogium ever given in Holy Writ to any man, and a testimony of excellence that sets his glory above all the endeavours of human oratory. Before he even saw the light, or began to breathe the vital air, being as yet unborn and only an infant, of six

months, he began by divine instinct to perform the office of Christ's Precursor, to acknowledge his incarnation and pay him his first homage of love and adoration; for, as the Gospel informs us, *he leaped with joy in the womb of Elizabeth when the mother of our Lord favoured her with his and her presence*, Luke, c. i. v. 24. It is the received opinion of St. Augustine, Ep. 187. and of others, that the Baptist, though conceived in original sin, was on this occasion freed from the guilt of it, and sanctified in his mother's womb at the presence of his Redeemer, as appears from the following words of the Angel to Zechariah, *Thy wife Elizabeth shall bring thee forth a son, and he shall be replenished with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb*. But why should I dwell so long on the childhood of a saint, whose whole life was one continued chain of the most heroic virtues, and in whom the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost grew up with his years? As he was elevated to the most exalted ministry that man ever appeared in, and surpassed all his predecessors by the dignity of his office, he was raised of course to a degree of sanctity suitable thereto. The very nature of his ministry gave him a superiority over all the prophets, and his sanctity was not inferior to his dignity. It is herein that his greatness may be briefly said to have consisted. To preserve his innocence and sanctity unspotted and unblemished, he sequestered himself at an early period from the society and evil communication of the world. Shunning the dangerous occasions of sin, he retired into a dreary wilderness in Judea, where he devoted the best part of his days to the spiritual exercises of prayer and heavenly contemplation, *until the time of his manifestation to Israel*. Luke, i. v. 86. The Gospel is silent on many of the virtues which he practised in his holy retreat, and concealed from the eyes of men, but which rendered him *truly great in the sight of the Lord*. He united the innocence of an Angel with all the rigorous austerities, self-denials, and mortifications of a penitent, and allowed himself no other nourishment or relaxation but what was barely sufficient to support nature. His garment consisted of camel's hair, and was no better than a species of coarse camlet. *He wore a leathern cincture about his loins*, the naked ground served him for a bed, and his food was locusts and wild honey, which the desert supplied him with. He neither eat bread, nor drank wine nor any strong drink, which gave occasion to the Saviour of the world to say of him, that *John came neither eating nor drinking*, Mat. c. xi. v. 18. his life being one continual fast and spiritual martyrdom. O how opposite is the conduct of the modern disciples and followers of Christ to the conduct of the forerunner of Christ? What a striking contrast is there between his life and our lives, though Christ assures us, Mat. c. xi. v. 12. that *from the time of John the Baptist till the present, the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and those that use violence bear it away*.

Far from resembling those fickle inconstant Christians who;

like unto a reed, shaken with every blast of wind, are carried away by the torrent of their passions and yield to the most trifling temptation, John persevered in the service of his Divine Master, and was not to be warped from his duty by any means. Having appeared at the age of thirty years on the banks of the river Jordan, he entered publicly upon the sacred functions of his ministry, and began by his word, as well as by his example, to preach the necessity of the baptism of penance, which was a figure of, and a preparation for, the baptism of the new law. He reprov'd the vices of all orders of men with undaunted zeal, and inveighed particularly against the pride and hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, the injustice of publicans, the extortions of tax gatherers, and the oppressions and cruelties of the military. Luke, iii. and his labours were crowned with such wonderful success, that crowds of proselytes flocked to him from the neighbouring countries, *repenting and confessing their sins and receiving his baptism*, Mat. c. iii. v. 6. The Jews, edified by the splendor of his doctrine and the lustre of his virtues, conceive so high an esteem and veneration for him, that they imagine him to be the promised Messiah. The zealous preacher of penance repeatedly assures them he is not even worthy to render the Messiah the least or the lowest service. He takes as much pains to undeceive and disabuse them of their mistaken notions, as others are apt to take pleasure in unmerited praises and applauses which they have no right to seek or to assume. His soul being truly humble he is little in his own eyes, though *great in the sight of the Lord*. It is the loftiest trees, says St. Augustine, that always shoot their roots deepest in the earth; and the higher a stately edifice rises, the lower in proportion is the foundation that is laid. In like manner, the more sublime and the more exalted the virtues and perfections of John the Baptist were, the deeper was the foundation of humility which he sunk and grounded them on. His spotless innocence, his angelic purity, his spirit of prayer and retirement, his unparalleled austerities and penance were wonderfully great, but his humility was the more profound in proportion. This was the crown of all his greatness. He openly declares to a solemn embassy of Jewish Priests and Levites who waited on him, that he is no more than an empty sound or a mere voice, to be attended to only on account of the meaning it conveys and the object it signifies. He even declines the title of a Prophet, as he did not foretell things to come, though he was more than a Prophet, as he pointed out the Messiah then already come. He denies that he is Elias, as he was not Elias in person, though he was Elias in spirit and office, Jo. c. i. He is unacquainted with his own high prerogatives and excellent perfections, and entirely taken up with promoting the honour and glory of his divine master. Whilst the world admires him, he undervalues himself; he forgets himself in the very bosom of glory; he annihilates himself in the most

exalted degree of dignity and sanctity; but the more he humbled himself, the more our Blessed Saviour exalted him and extolled his merit, comparing him, Jo. c. v. v. 35. to *a burning lamp, and shining lamp, burning with the most ardent zeal, and shining by the fervour of his charity and other brilliant virtues, with which he was endowed.*

When Jesus Christ produced himself in public, about the age of thirty years, and submitted by the most astonishing vocation to the baptism of his forerunner, whose humility yielded to the duty of obedience after some resistance, the Baptist concluded that, having announced his Divine Master to the world, it was high time for him to retire. He saw the Holy Ghost descending on him at the river Jordan in the appearance of a dove, and heard a voice from Heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Mat. c. iii.* He therefore resolved to leave him the glory of shining alone, as the morning star which precedes and announces the sun and shines with its rays, withdraws its borrowed light and leaves the glory of enlightening the world to the sun alone, as soon as it appears and shows itself above the horizon. The grand object of the Baptist was to bear testimony to the truth, that, as the Gospel says, *all men might believe through him, and he induced by his preaching to embrace the light which enlightens every man that cometh into this world, Jo. c. i.* He acquitted himself faithfully of this duty, *fulfilled his ministry with joy, v. 29.* and manifested Christ to mankind by so many illustrious testimonies, that he had the pleasure to see his glory shining more brightly every day, and eclipsing the great renown he himself had justly acquired. To raise his reputation the more, he sent those he had baptized to receive from Christ a more powerful and a more efficacious baptism. *Behold, said he to them, the Lamb of God; behold him that taketh away the sins of the world. This is he who is preferred before me, because he was before me. I baptize in water, but it is he that baptizeth in the Holy Ghost, Jo. c. i. and again, c. iii. v. 30. He must increase, but I must be lessened and diminished in the opinion of mankind, when they begin to believe in him and know his great superiority over me. It was with this view, and not for his own instruction, but for the greater edification of his disciples, that he dispatched and sent them to Christ, Mat. c. xi. for he had reason to believe that the sight of his sacred person would charm their eyes, the sanctity of his doctrine would subdue their hearts, his heavenly conversation would attract their affections, and that the splendour of his miracles would remove all their doubts, convince their understanding, and engage them to become his disciples. Thus St. John took care like a good father, to provide the best of masters for them before he consummated his ministry, and to induce them to enter into the school of Jesus Christ and learn his heavenly doctrine. Behold here, my brethren, a sketch of his*

holy life. How many instructive lessons does it not furnish us with? Should not his example make a deep impression in our souls, and teach us the indispensable obligation we are under to lead a penitential life, in order to carry the kingdom of Heaven by an holy violence to our corrupt nature? Should we not endeavour, like him, to discharge with fidelity all the duties of our vocation; and to imitate his humility, his zeal, and such other of his eminent virtues as are centred within our sphere, proportioned to our strength, and suitable to our respective states? This is the true method of honouring the Saints of God, and the surest way to be crowned hereafter with them in glory. Our Saint finished his career by a glorious martyrdom under the tyrannical government of Herod Antipas. What was the cause hereof? for, as St. Augustine remarks, it is not the punishment but the cause that makes a martyr. *Martyrem non facit pœna sed causa.* An insatiable fury in a lascivious woman, a wanton address in her dancing daughter, a barbarous complaisance in a sacrilegious tyrant, a noble intrepidity in a mortified Saint, were the motives that cast him into an obscure and nauseous prison, condemned him to a frightful dungeon, loaded him with chains, and deprived him of his life amidst the dazzling splendor of a royal court, and the rejoicings of a birthday banquet. His sacred head, spouting forth rivulets of blood, was served up upon a dish to gratify the rage and vengeance of a lewd incestuous Queen. Cease then, O Christians, to murmur, complain and repine when you are visited with crosses, disappointments and sufferings, since you here behold innocence and sanctity bleeding, vice and iniquity triumphing, the greatest man born of a woman persecuted and oppressed, whilst a monster of impiety was permitted by an all-wise Providence to enjoy the momentary comforts of this transitory life, and wallow in filthy pleasures. All the inhabitants of Jerusalem were witnesses of the incestuous and adulterous conversation of Herod with his brother's wife, but none of them had the courage to speak to him about the scandalous state wherein he lived. St. John was too sensible of the strict obligation of fraternal correction on similar occasions, to be silent either through fear or human respect. His zeal and charity prompted him to give the tyrant an admonition, and to reprove his misconduct with an impartial freedom and an undaunted authority, in these few words: *It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.* The consequence was that Herod, at the request of Herodias ordered his head to be cut off in the prison, and to be brought up in a most inhuman manner to his own table, Mark, c. vi. Thrice happy Saint! whose death, equal to his life, was precious in the sight of the Lord; and rewarded with the everlasting joys and glory of Heaven. Let us, my brethren, endeavour to bear some resemblance of him, by an imitation of the virtues of his holy life and happy death as nearly as we can, that after living and dying in the service

and grace of our Creator, our souls may be translated from the miseries of this sinful Babylon to the charming mansions of heavenly Jerusalem. Which is the blessing that I cordially wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Necessity of an Operative Faith, accompanied with Good Works, and the Practice of Christian Virtues.

Omnis arbor, quæ non facit fructum bonum, excidetur, et in ignem mittetur.

Mat. c. vii. v. 19.

Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire.

Mat. c. vii. v. 19.

THE moral sense of these words of this day's Gospel is plain and obvious. It is evident that the fate of Christianity is hereby emblemed and pointed out. Not only the tree that brings forth bad fruit shall be condemned to the flames, but this also shall be the fate of the barren tree on which no good fruit is found; that is to say, not only those who live openly engaged in the practice of vice shall receive the sentence of eternal fire, but likewise the indolent Christian, who does not produce the real fruits of solid virtue and good works. A mere speculative or abstractive faith will not save him; for the true saving faith is active and operative. It *worketh by charity* and the practice of Christian virtues, Gal. c. v. v. 6. The advantages of faith are indeed great in themselves, but, as St. James remarks, they will avail us but little without good works. To be justified in the sight of God, two conditions are essentially necessary, faith and obedience; that is, we must not only believe what Christ has taught, but we must also obey what he has commanded. Our actions must agree with our belief, and our lives must correspond with the purity of the faith we profess. As Catholics you are fully persuaded hereof, my brethren; you know that it is by a practical and active faith that *the just man lives*, and hopes to reap the benefit of Christ's Redemption, who expressly says in the Gospel of this day, *Not every one who saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he who doth the will of my Father who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.* Yet how few are there to be found who practice what they believe, and live up to the holy law and will of God? There are millions who firmly believe

all that he has revealed, but how few are there, comparatively speaking, who perform what he has commanded? What a shameful contradiction is there not between their faith and their morals? What monsters of impiety, cries out St. Jerom, do we not behold in the very midst of Christianity? This monstrous contradiction between faith and practice, so deplorable in itself, and still so general in the world, shall be the subject of the following discourse. In the first point, I will shew you how injurious and provoking it is to the Almighty; and in the second how prejudicial and fatal it is to the sinner. Let us previously implore the assistance of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, whom the Angel greeted with these words, *Ave Maria*.

When the Church, in her infancy, was opposed by the incredulity and obstinacy of the Jews, she gloriously triumphed by the zeal and miracles of her Apostles; when she was attacked by the infidelity of the Gentiles, she became victorious by the courage and constancy of her martyrs; when heresiarchs and sectaries attempted to corrupt and adulterate the purity of her faith, she refuted their erroneous tenets by the wisdom and erudition of her doctors, and by the decisions of her general councils; but she has not yet been happy enough to subdue the vicious and disorderly conduct of numbers of her own refractory children and rotten members, who persecute her faith most shamefully by their wicked and scandalous lives. She has not yet triumphed over the perverseness of those half Christians and half Catholics, who believe one way and live another. Their immorality is an evil that still subsists to this very day, and openly contradicts her doctrine, slights her salutary admonitions, overlooks her menaces and anathemas, and resists the force of grace and all the good examples of the virtuous. To compare their conduct with the rules of Christianity, one would be apt to infer that the world is the only God they adore, the only Sovereign whose laws they revere. Regardless of the advantages of future happiness, they appear to be totally attached to the happiness of this life, and to be influenced only by temporal views in almost all their actions. Yet they will tell you, their sentiments are perfectly orthodox, and that they do not doubt of any revealed truth. But who can give credit to their declarations, when their actions contradict and give the lie to their words? How can they be supposed to believe, for example, that unspeakable misery in the flames of hell will be the punishment of the wicked, and that inexpressible happiness in the kingdom of Heaven will be the reward of the virtuous, when they abandon themselves with so much facility to vice, and sleep with so much tranquillity in the arms of perdition? How can they be supposed to be convinced of the enormity and dismal effects of mortal sin, when they commit it with so little remorse, and expose themselves

to the manifest danger of perishing eternally, by continuing whole years together in that unhappy state?

But let us suppose that they are not incredulous, and that they have not lost their faith. They are still inexcusable for acting contrary to it, and the irregularity so visible in their lives, is what cannot be sufficiently lamented. Were they but directed by their faith, sin would appear unmasked in its real deformity, virtue only would seem amiable, and the vain show of transitory allurements which the world displays to their view, would soon vanish like a phantom. Their faith would tell them, that by every mortal sin they are guilty of, they lose God and his grace, the merits of their past good works, and the glory of Heaven. Their faith would set before their eyes a frightful picture of the last judgment, and of the abyss of devouring flames which the anger of God has kindled, for the purpose of tormenting impenitent sinners for a never-ending eternity; it would move them to a speedy and sincere repentance, as being the only remedy that can preserve them from the impending dangers that threaten their souls; it would, like the soul in the human body, animate all their actions, rouse and influence their desires, and inspire them with courage and resolution to surmount every difficulty that occurs in the practice of virtue. Such were the fruits that faith produced in the primitive ages of Christianity, and such likewise are the fruits that it would be productive of in our days, were we but directed by it, and did we but make it the invariable rule of our conduct; but, alas, the generality of modern Christians, instead of living conformably to the dictates of religion, and regulating their actions according to the principles of their faith, reject and contradict in their practice the sacred truths which they profess with their mouths. Nothing is more holy than their belief, nothing more disorderly than their behaviour. They believe like saints, but live like infidels; nay, they often surpass even the very Pagans themselves in criminal excesses; their voice is like the voice of Jacob, as the Scripture speaks, but their hands, that is to say, their works and actions, are like those of Esau. They are Christians and Catholics in theory and speculation, and appear to be no better than Turks and Mahometans in practice. How many nominal Christians of this kind are to be met with, even within the precincts of this city and its liberties? They admit the necessity of good works to salvation, and yet they live as if they believed that they may be saved by faith alone, without doing any good works; nay, as if they expected to go to Heaven, by running on blindly in the broad road that leads to hell and eternal perdition, and scarce ever giving any other proof of their believing in the existence of one God and three persons, but when they abuse the blessed name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, by the most horrid oaths, imprecations and blasphemies.

As Catholics and disciples of Christ, our lives should be copies of that Divine Original, and our actions should be a public declaration of the sanctity of our profession. Our faith, so venerable for its antiquity, so amiable for its purity, so solidly grounded and confirmed by a cloud of miracles, should rouse our hopes, inflame our desires, and animate us ~~to make our vocation and election sure by the practice of good works,~~ 2 Ep. St. Peter, c. i. v. 10. It should excite us to vindicate the honour of God, prove the truth of his doctrine, contribute to the conversion of sinners, and confound the false maxims of the world by an edifying behaviour. St. Paul established this great maxim amongst the Romans as an invariable rule of their conduct, when he said in general, without exception of persons, *Let every one of ye please his neighbour for his good unto edification,* c. xv. v. 2. Hence if we look back towards the infancy of the Church, we shall behold with pleasure the primitive Christians converting a pagan world by the sanctity of their example, and diffusing the good odour of Christ on all sides, by the purity of their morals and the practice of every heroic and divine virtue which their actions breathed. Armed with the shield of faith, and inflamed by the great truths which it represented to them, their constancy was not to be shaken by all the rage of the most cruel tyrants. Their fidelity was tried like gold in the furnace. The violence of torments, and the power of delusive charms, were employed to compel them to apostatize or renounce some part of their religious creed, but in vain; for in proportion as they were slain by the persecuting sword, their number increased and multiplied, so as to give occasion to Tertullian to say, that *the blood of martyrs became a fertile seed of new Christians.* Did we, my brethren, but honour our faith as they did, by our morals, and by an exact conformity between what we believe and what we practice, our exemplary lives would not only make our holy religion appear in its native lustre and genuine beauty, but would also be an effectual means to bring about the conversion of numbers of souls. Our separated brethren would no longer view our principles in the unfavourable light they usually do; they would be disabused, undeceived and edified. But the monstrous opposition they observe between the belief and practice of wicked Catholics, scandalizes them to the highest degree, and contributes to increase their prejudices, to multiply their mistaken notions, to remove them farther from the truth, and to destroy in their hearts all the good dispositions they might otherwise have. I leave yourselves now to judge how injurious this must be to the cause of religion, and how provoking to the Almighty. *Woe be to them,* says the Gospel, *who are the cause of such scandal,* and who, by their bad example, hinder the conversion of their neighbour! *Woe be to them who draw so many bitter reproaches on the Church of*

God, by the shameful inconsistency that appears between their conduct and their belief! St. Augustine does not hesitate to call them the greatest enemies of Christianity, and the most dangerous persecutors of the Church, inasmuch as through them the name of God is blasphemed among unbelievers, the sacred mysteries of religion are exposed to raillery and open contempt, and many foul aspersions are undeservedly thrown upon our doctrine, as if it countenanced and authorised the vicious practices of some of our refractory and rotten members. They may, perhaps, feed themselves at present with chimerical hopes; but the day will come when they shall be convinced by fatal experience, that the faith which they profess with their mouths, but deny by their actions, instead of saving them will serve for the rule of their condemnation, and render them liable to greater punishment. This reflection leads me to my second point.

Scarce was the Church of Christ established when an error was broached, setting forth, that how irregular soever were the lives of men, it sufficed for salvation if they believed as Christians. The Nicolaites, and the disciples of Simon the Magician, were the first who declared for this impious dogma. Never, perhaps, was there any heresy less plausible than this; for what probability could there be that Incarnated Wisdom, the Son of the eternal Father, came only on earth to found a religion in favour of libertinism, and to indulge mankind in their criminal disorders with the hopes of impunity, provided they but believed in him. The glaring absurdity of this erroneous tenet conveys with it its own condemnation; however, the Scripture is very explicit on this head in sundry places. It expressly declares, that *every tree that does not bring forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire*. St. James says, that *as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead*, c. ii. v. 26. St. Paul says, that *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by charity*, Gal. v. and again, 1 Cor. xiii. *though I should have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing*. The unhappy fate of the slothful servant, who was doomed to the same place of darkness with the unfaithful servant, shews also, that God will comprehend in the same condemnation those Christians who neglect to improve the talents entrusted to their care and those who abuse and misapply them. In like manner the parable of the five foolish virgins who were rejected, not for any intrigues or mal-practices, but because they neglected to furnish their lamps with the oil of charity and good works, is a proof, not only of the necessity of being exempt from the gross and scandalous vices of the world, and leading a moral, honest life, as thousands of infidels do, but also of the obligation we are under to distinguish ourselves by the practice of Christian virtues, and to excite

our neighbour, by the shining light of our good example, to glorify our Father in Heaven. In the account also that the Gospel gives us of the last judgment, when the Sovereign Judge *will come to render to every one according to his works*, as St. Paul says, Rom. c. ii. v. 6. no other cause is assigned for the damnation of the reprobate but the neglect and omission of good works.

What will then become of wicked Christians and Catholics who live in the open practice of vice, and disgrace the august character they received in baptism, by their immoralities and scandalous behaviour? What will be the fate of those who, being enlightened by the rays of the Gospel, and abundantly favoured with the gifts of Heaven, only abuse the graces they have received, and provoke the justice of God by the malice of their crying sins? Have they not reason to expect a more severe sentence and a more dreadful punishment than pagans and infidels, who sin through ignorance, since they are incomparably more criminal and more ungrateful, as they have received more signal favours and blessings from Heaven? St. Peter says, 2 Ep. c. ii. that it would be better for them to have remained in the darkness of infidelity, and never to have come to the knowledge of God's holy law, than to resist and transgress the truth after knowing and embracing it; for this will serve to enhance their guilt, and subject them to a more severe punishment. The Ninivites, who did penance at the preaching of the Prophet Jonas, shall rise up in judgment against them, as the Gospel speaks, Mat. c. xii. v. 41. And the inhabitants of Sodom and Ghomorrah shall meet with a more favourable judgment on the last day, Mat. c. xi. v. 24. Nay, even in this life, their ingratitude and perverseness often draw down the dire effects of God's wrath and indignation on their criminal heads; for when the measure of their iniquities is filled up, and the time of forbearance is over, the axe is laid to the root, and they are treated like the barren fig-tree mentioned in St. Luke, c. xiii. which encumbered the ground to no purpose, and therefore fell under a dreadful malediction. They are deprived of the gracious favours and heavenly succours which they slight and abuse; they are left to themselves and to the corruption of their own hearts; they are delivered over to a reprobate sense, and abandoned, like the vineyard spoken of in Isaías, c. v. which was given up to be plundered and trodden under foot like a desert, because it produced nothing but wild grapes and brambles, briars and thorns, though it had been cultivated with much care and assiduity, and copiously watered with those gentle showers that descend from the clouds. We have a sad instance of this terrifying truth in the Jews, who were once the favorite vineyard of the Lord of Israel, but are now above sixteen centuries abandoned and forsaken, dispersed throughout the world and branded with infamy. The sentence that was announced by the Pro-

phet Isaias has been literally verified in them, in just punishment of their ingratitude and contempt of the laws of God; they abused his mercy, and therefore they now experience the severity of his justice; they neglected to produce the good fruits he expected from them, and are therefore deprived of that special providence which was their safeguard and protection. The kingdom of God, and those heavenly succours which they would not profit of, have been withdrawn from them and given to other nations. The light of the Gospel has crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and darted its beams to the new world in South and North America, and to the very corners of the East and West Indies; it has penetrated to the most barbarous parts of the earth, and one single ray of it has not as yet enlightened that stiff-necked people. This example of God's avenging justice should teach all sinners to learn wisdom at their expense, and to profit by their disgrace; it should be a warning to Christians and Catholics to be more attentive to their religious duties, and to beware of provoking Heaven to punish them in like manner, by a subtraction of its gracious favours and blessings, and by depriving them in its wrath of the great advantages and benefits of the true saving faith, as has happened to many extensive nations where the Christian religion heretofore flourished with great splendor. What is become of Greece, once the seminary of learning and the nursery of piety? What is become of Egypt, heretofore inhabited by twenty-seven millions of Christians? What is become of so many other kingdoms and provinces in Asia Minor, and in Africa? Those vast regions which enriched the Church with Cyprians, Augustines, Jeroms, Chrysostoms, Brásils, Gregories, and numberless other illustrious doctors and saints, are no longer watered with the dew of divine grace; they are become the seat of infidelity and irreligion; they are overspread with the darkness of paganism. O my brethren, how deplorable would our condition be, were we so unfortunate as to experience the severity of God's justice in this respect; and to be treated in like manner in punishment of our sins? O merciful Jesus, preserve us from this misfortune; remove all scandals from thy Church, and give us grace to become worthy members of so illustrious a body. O may those unquenchable flames which are prepared for the fruitless tree, for the slothful and indolent servant, rouse our sluggish souls from the lethargic sleep of tepidity and indolence, and excite us to improve the talents and graces we have received to thy honour and glory, and to the edification of our neighbour. Grant us, we beseech thee, a lively, active and practical faith, animated with charity and accompanied with good works, that by living here in a manner worthy of our vocation and profession, we may have the happiness to see and enjoy thee hereafter in the kingdom of Heaven. Which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

*On Corresponding with the Grace of God.*Humble reasoners villications turn.—*Luk. c. xvi. v. 2.*Give an account of thy stewardship.—*Luke, c. xvi. v. 2.*

THE subject of this day's Gospel is the parable of the unjust steward, who being accused of having wasted his master's goods, was called upon to give an account of his stewardship, and who, therefore, managed his affairs with such ingenuity, and settled his accounts so artfully, that he was continued in this employment and gained his master's applause, not for his fraudulent and unjust proceedings, but for the prudent expedients and cautious measures he adopted and contrived, in order to prevent his own ruin, and avert the danger of being dismissed from his office with disgrace, and reduced either to beggary or to very hard labour, which he found himself unequal to. This parable gives us to understand, that we are all stewards of the Almighty God, and that there is a day of reckoning to come, on which we must appear before his awful tribunal, to give a strict account of our stewardship, and to shew in what manner we have corresponded with his graces, managed his gifts, and employed his favours and blessings. A diligent enquiry will then be made, whether we have improved the talents entrusted to our care for God's honour and glory, and the benefit of our neighbour, or buried them under ground like the indolent servant, or misapplied them to answer the inordinate cravings of self-love, pride and vanity. The most effectual means you can devise, my brethren, to avert the wrath of Heaven, and gain the friendship of the Sovereign Judge on that great accounting day, is to make good use at present of the gracious favours and blessings that are conferred on you, in order to enable you to accomplish the grand and important affair of your salvation. If you abuse and reject them; if you reap no benefit or advantage from them but render them unprofitable, you have reason to apprehend that your ingratitude will draw down on you the most formidable vengeance of Heaven, and provoke the Lord your God to withdraw from you those graces which you slight and despise, and give them to others who will profit of them, according to these words which Jesus Christ formerly said to the Jews, *The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation yielding the fruits of it.* Mat. c. xxi. v. 43. To engage you, then, to correspond

faithfully with the graces of God, is the design of the following discourse. If you continue to render unprofitable the graces of God, he will deprive you of them. This is my first point. He will give them to others who will profit by them. This is the second point, and the whole subject of your favourable attention. Let us previously implore the light of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin. *Ave Maria.*

St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, c. i. v. 18. informs us of the dreadful punishment that God inflicts on those who abuse his graces ; for he says, *The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven upon all impiety, and upon the iniquity of those men who detain the truth of God in iniquity*, that is, on all those who receive his grace, and reap no benefit by it, and who detain in an unjust captivity all those grand truths which he has been pleased to make known to them. But what is the *wrath of God*, that falls on the heads of those who abuse his graces and despise his goodness ? Is it that he commands Heaven and earth, and all the elements to arm and revenge the contempt of his favours ? No, my brethren ; for since such chastisements could only punish that which is the least culpable in man, and affect the body alone without touching the soul, it is not in this sensible manner that the anger of God is always made manifest. But as it is the most tender proof of his infinite bounty towards sinners to go in search of them in the midst of their criminal engagements, to speak to them in the bottom of the heart, to press, invite and solicit them to return to their duty ; so it is the greatest mark of his wrath and justice to abandon them, to retire from them, and to speak to them no more. It was this dreadful chastisement that David so much apprehended, when he prayed thus to the Lord, Ps. xlix. *O my God be not silent ; let your sacred voice still echo in the bottom of my soul.* It was this punishment that the Almighty heretofore so often threatened by his Prophets to inflict on his people. *I have spoken, I have raised my voice to press and conjure you to return to me, but you have been deaf to all my amorous invitations, wherefore ; I shall in my turn be silent ; I shall no more disturb your false, your fatal repose, which will end in your eternal ruin, in death everlasting.* Thus it is that God threatens to manifest his wrath to sinners who are unfaithful to his graces. *We have taken care of Babylon, says the Lord, Jerem. c. li. v. 9. and Babylon is not cured ; let us abandon it, and have its welfare no longer at heart.* It is true, indeed, God does not abandon us unless we first abandon him, as St. Augustine says ; he is undoubtedly a God full of mercy and bounty for those who attentively listen to his calls and faithfully correspond with his graces ; but he is armed with wrath and vengeance against those who despise his goodness, are deaf to his inspirations, and reject his invitations. For this reason Christ assures us in the Gospel, that the servant who has received but little, and

has profited by this little, that more shall be given to him; but that he who has buried his talent, this talent shall be taken from him, and he himself as an unprofitable servant, shall be cast into exterior darkness, where there will be perpetual weeping and gnashing of teeth. This, alas! will be the fate of the unhappy soul that slights and abandons God, and in its turn is abandoned by him. It will fall from sin into sin, from crime into crime, without being sensible of the misery of its unhappy condition; or if sensible, it will still flatter itself with the pleasing hopes that it will one day renounce its criminal engagements. In the interim, God in his anger suffers it to be deceived by this pernicious illusion, and to fall into a spiritual lethargy, which insensibly conducts it into endless misery. He permits it to be overpowered with a fatal blindness, and to sleep peaceably in the arms of perdition without disturbing its repose, until it awakes to feel the rigour of his justice in hell. Such is the order of his providence, that when the sinner has filled up the measure of his iniquities, and deserves to perish, God withdraws those powerful and those efficacious graces, which would not only enlighten his understanding to see the horror of his condition, but would also inflame his will with an ardent desire, and with a generous resolution to overcome all these obstacles that oppose his conversion; and the subtraction of these graces is the most formidable punishment that the Almighty can inflict on him in this life, because nothing removes the sinner farther from his last end, which is eternal salvation; and consequently, nothing makes him approach nearer the greatest of all misfortunes, eternal damnation; since without these graces he never will be saved. Moreover, this subtraction of grace hardens the sinner and makes him grow obdurate in his unhappy state; he no longer discovers the deadly poison and fatal effects of sin, but becomes enamoured of it; he doats on the pleasing object that gratifies his passions, and is captivated by its engaging aspect; for when grace ceases to shine on the eyes of his soul, and to display the grand ideas of a just and avenging God, of a judgment without mercy, of a sentence without appeal, of a miserable eternity, he is deprived of those interior lights, by means of which he might be alarmed and terrified, and might discern how odious and frightful sin is in itself, and be roused to have recourse to a remedy, and use his best endeavours to rise out of the deplorable state to which he is unfortunately reduced. On the other hand he is allured and attracted by the false and deceitful charms of sin, and by his inordinate affection to it he justly forfeits his right to Heaven, and loses his soul for all eternity. Nay, this subtraction of grace is a punishment which the Almighty not only inflicts on those declared libertines who make open profession of violating his laws, and who rejoice and glory in their criminal excesses, but also on those who lead an idle, inactive, unprofitable life, without performing any good

works ; for why should the Almighty bestow his favours on us if we are unwilling to profit by them ? Is it not to reject and profane his graces, not to employ them for the end which they were designed for ? The fruitless fig-tree, mentioned in the Gospel, was struck with an anathema because it bore not fruit ; the barren land was cursed because it yielded not grain in abundance ; the servant was condemned, and lost the talent he had received, because he did not make the proper use of it. Such is the punishment which God inflicts on those who do not correspond with his favours ; it is thus they are cursed, anathematized and abandoned by Heaven, who reject his graces, who despise, insult and outrage his goodness, and who, notwithstanding his many efforts to withdraw them from their criminal engagements, persist obstinate in vice, closing their ears to all his charitable admonitions, and refusing for whole years together to listen to his fatherly entreaties. Were they but obedient and submissive to his voice, his providence would never abandon them, his eyes would be constantly fixed upon them to watch for their security and defence, all his treasures would be open for them, and his bounty would engage him still to heap new favours on them ; but it is most just that he should at length despise them as they have despised him ; that he should be hardened against them as their heart has been so long hardened against him, and that he should punish the so often repeated abuses of his heavenly favours. It is thus, in fine, my brethren, that those obdurate souls perish, who, after having often rejected the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, fall from small sins into great, from sins often reiterated into a deplorable habit, from this habit into a kind of necessity, from this necessity into contempt and obduracy, from obduracy into despair, from despair into hell, and when they are buried in these mansions of misery, it is then that God will no longer have compassion on them. Burn, unhappy sinners, burn, cry, lament, roll yourselves in this devouring fire, God will never more look on you with the eyes of pity ; he never will commiserate your distressed condition. There are so many ages that Cain burns in these flames, so many ages that the Sodomites suffer ; God beholds their unspeakable torments without pity ; his anger is never to be appeased ; his justice is to be for ever inflexible, inexorable. Can you, then, my brethren, after such instances of the formidable judgments of God, can you any longer continue to despise his goodness, to reject his graces, to resist his inspirations ? If you do he will withdraw his graces from you in this world as a prelude to that eternal punishment which awaits obstinate sinners in the next, as you have already heard, and these graces he will bestow on others, who will profit by them. This leads me to my second point.

It is a received maxim in philosophy, that God and nature do nothing in vain, and of course, grace, which is one of the most noble productions of the Almighty, never remains unprofitable.

But you will ask me, do not many sinners reject grace, and with regard to these, is it not absolutely unprofitable, as they benefit nothing by it? It is true; but this grace will not be lost; this sinner is not willing to profit by it; it will be given to another who will receive it, and make the proper use of it. This is a truth which we learn from the following parable mentioned in the Gospel of St. Luke, c. xiv. A certain nobleman made a great feast, and invited many; but all these unwilling to answer the invitation, desired to be excused; the nobleman immediately ordered his servant to go forth into the streets and lanes of the city to gather up all he met, and to bring in the poor, the lame and the blind, and the servant said, *Lord it is done, as thou didst command, and yet there is place*; wherefore the Lord said to the servant, *Go forth into the highways and hedges, and compel them to enter, that my house may be filled.*

This parable, my brethren, is an emblem or figure of what happens with regard to the eternal banquet of glory prepared in the kingdom of Heaven. God invites all mankind to this great feast, and in particular all Christians; he calls them interiorly by his secret inspirations, by the movements of his grace, and exteriorly by the preachers, teachers, and pastors of his Church, who speak to them on his part, and in his name. Many despise these calls, these kind invitations of their sovereign benefactor, and by this contempt seal their eternal reprobation; others are called in their stead, who, profiting by their downfall, cheerfully embrace the offer, faithfully correspond with the graces of God, and are thereby admitted to that eternal feast which he has prepared in the kingdom of Heaven for those who constantly love and serve him. It is then an unquestionable truth, that the Almighty withdraws his graces from those who despise them, to bestow them on others who are to make the proper use of them. Nay, it is a truth, which has been long since verified in the Jews, reproved by Heaven for the abuse of its favours, and in the Gentiles, who profited by their reprobation, and were adopted and substituted in their place. If then, the Almighty has numberless graces, it is not to reserve them to himself, but to communicate them; he requires but proper subjects to bestow on them these supernatural blessings, and he withdraws them from such as are so unhappy as to abuse them, in order to give them to others who will make proper use of them. Beware then, O sinner, of presuming on the bounty of your God as you frequently do, even so far as to persevere in your criminal disorders, because you have a good God to deal with; beware, I say, of flattering yourself into such a false security, and saying to yourself, God is too merciful to suffer me to perish for ever; for though you should be so unhappy as to perish for ever, God will not be the less merciful for that; his mercy still will find its account in the distribution of his favours, and it will lose nothing though you are eternally damned, because others will be saved in your

stead. It is true, mercy in this supposition will not be exerted in favour of you, but it will be exerted in favour of another, who will take your place, and obtain that crown of glory which was designed for you in Heaven. Hence the Holy Ghost gives you this important advice, which you should be always careful to reduce to practice : *Be diligent to retain what ye have, fearing lest another should take that crown which has been prepared for you*, Apocal. c.xi. Whatever degree, then, of sanctity or perfection you imagine you have acquired, still beware not to harbour too great an opinion of yourselves, and still much more not to despise others ; for you are not confirmed in grace, nor those whom you despise, in final impenitence ; you know not what is to be their lot, nor what will be your own fate. The judgments of God are formidable ; they are abysses which human understanding cannot fathom ; he is often pleased to exalt the humble, and humble the proud ; to exalt the humble as high as the highest Heavens, and humble the proud as low as the bottom of hell. The deplorable downfall of many who soared almost to the highest degree of sanctity, and are now eternally damned, with all their pretended merits, is a glaring but terrifying proof of this truth. Whoever you therefore are, whether just or sinners, these grand truths concern you, and you should draw from them consequences which may be of advantage to your souls. If you are just, beware not to conceive too high an opinion of yourselves. Perhaps you will be one day rejected like Saul, and that sinner who now appears so infamous in your eyes, will, like another David, be raised to the same throne with the princes of the people of God ; perhaps you will take the place of Judas, and he that of St. Mathew, for virtue and grace are not inseparably annexed to any person, to any state or condition. No one then should presume in his own merits, or in the sanctity of his profession. All this has availed nothing to the Jews, who are by adoption the people and children of God, and the heirs of his kingdom, and these advantages they unhappily forfeited, because they made not the proper use of them. Such are the dreadful consequences of abusing the favours of Heaven. This is what should make even the most virtuous work their salvation in an holy fear and trembling, lest the grace of God be withdrawn from them in punishment of their despising, slighting, neglecting, and, what is worse, frequently resisting it. Is not this contempt, this neglect, this resistance, the sad cause of the many frailties which are often visible even amongst those who are remarkable for piety and religion ? How many do we see daily shipwrecked on their voyage to eternity ? How many have lost, in one moment, the chastity and probity of several years ? How many christian heroes, who for the greatest part of their lives were exemplary for their piety, have at length miserably fallen, and are now lost for all eternity ? They were, notwithstanding, the children of the kingdom, but now they

find it verified by woful experience, that *the children of the kingdom shall be cast into exterior darkness*, as the Gospel expresses it, *where there will be perpetual weeping and gnashing of teeth*. Had they but persevered a little longer in the practice of virtue, and corresponded with the favours offered to them, Crowns of Glory were ready to fall on their heads, and inexpressible bliss would have been the reward of their fidelity to God's graces; but one unlucky hour blasted all their hopes, frustrated all their expectations, and their reprobation became an occasion of salvation to others, to whom the advantages they were possessed of have been transferred; *for the kingdom of God is taken from some, and given to others, who yield the fruits of it*. This should excite the vigilance of the just, and engage them to be ever careful in corresponding with the favours of Heaven, since, though they are just to-day, they may be sinners to-morrow; though this day saints, to-morrow they may be in the state of damnation.

As for you, sinners, whoever you are, who have been long deaf to the calls of God, and for a series of years immersed in the mire of sin and sensuality, be not discouraged or dismayed, the Almighty has still, perhaps, some graces in reserve and in store for you. Idolatrous nations have heretofore come to the knowledge of the true religion; morals the most corrupt have been changed, habits the most inveterate have been conquered, vices the most odious and abominable have been effaced; monsters of impiety have become patterns of virtue. Do not then despair, like unhappy Cain, or look on your salvation as impossible. Millions precipitate themselves into the bottomless abyss, and perish for all eternity on account of their infidelity to the graces that are offered to them. You may derive an advantage from their misfortune, and profit by this favourable opportunity; they lose the Crowns of Glory which were designed for them; you may gain these Crowns if you please. There is not any one amongst you so wicked or abandoned, but may still be reclaimed by the help of divine grace; there is not one of you but may still equal, or surpass the most virtuous souls you see on earth, in virtue and merits. If you ascend in thought into Heaven, and take a view of the blessed, you will see many among them who were heretofore notorious sinners. They are enjoying their God in the mansions of bliss, whilst the children of the kingdom groan and lament in exterior darkness. Remember that Jesus Christ himself has declared in the Gospel, that publicans and prostitutes would take place of the most regular amongst the scribes and pharisees in the kingdom of Heaven. St. Mathew experienced this truth: from a publican he became an Apostle; St. Paul, from a blasphemer and a persecutor of the Church, became a doctor of nations, a vessel of election, a prodigy of grace and sanctity; and Magdalen, though a woman of bad fame, surpassed even virgins in virtue and merits.

Begin then, sinners, to labour strenuously in the grand affair of your salvation ; let not the difficulty of the enterprise deter you ; consider what a fund you have to depend on, what a support ? So many graces, which a numberless multitude of reprobate sinners have abused, they are for you, if you are willing to accept of them ; ask for them in the name of Jesus, and your God will grant them ; nay, he does not always wait to be asked ; does he not often wait and strike at the door of your heart to gain admittance into your souls ? At present he invites you to return and give yourselves up to him ; he prevents you, he seeks you, he presses you to throw yourselves into the arms of his mercy. Resolve, then, from this day, from this moment, no longer to reject the favours of Heaven, no longer to tear open these sacred wounds of your crucified Jesus, which have already poured forth streams of blood to wash away all your horrid crimes. Cry out from the bottom of your hearts, *O my God, we are now determined never more to be deaf to thy calls, never more to reject thy loving invitations, never more to abuse thy gracious favours and blessings.* Strengthen, O Lord, this our good resolution, and grant that by co-operating faithfully with thy grace here on earth, we may, as the reward of our fidelity, see and enjoy thee hereafter in the kingdom of Heaven. Which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Jesus Weeping over Jerusalem, &c.

Videns Jesus Jerusalem flevit super illam.—Luc. c. xix. v. 41.

Jesus seeing the city of Jerusalem, he wept over it.—Luke, c. xix. v. 41.

THE misery and insensibility of mankind have always been the subject of the tears and tenderness of Jesus Christ. No sooner had he blessed the world with his nativity, but his infant cries proclaimed him the pledge of sinners ; nor was the tomb of Lazarus adorned with the heavenly drops which trickled from his sacred eyes, but as it exhibited the corruption and perverseness of sinners ; and if his heart overflows with grief at the sight of Jerusalem, it is because that city had no foresight of her future misery, and refused the present graces which were offered to it. But if the Jews, deaf to every holy inspiration, and insensible of the calamities that were to ensue, have

been reproved and abandoned by God because they neglected the different times in which he favoured them with his blessings, it is our business at present to become wise at their expence, and by opposing virtue unto vice, establish a lasting felicity on the ruins of their slighted glory. It is our duty and interest to improve and manage well the precious moments of our visitation, and beware of neglecting the favourable opportunities which the Father of mercies is pleased to offer us to work our salvation. This is what Christian prudence dictates and whispers to our hearts. We should consider attentively that the disaster of Jerusalem was but a faint shadow of the eternal punishments that are reserved for obstinate and impenitent sinners in the next life, and therefore, if we have our eternal welfare at heart, it is incumbent on us, whilst the sun of grace and mercy shines, to mingle our tears with the tears of Jesus Christ, and lament our past sins in the bitterness of our souls. O that I could be so happy as to excite in you all this day the like spirit of compunction! It is what I shall attempt by laying before you a plain exposition of the Gospel, and shewing you how deplorable is the state of all impenitent sinners groaning under the weight of mortal sin, and what fatal consequences they expose themselves to by rejecting the graces of God. Enable me, O Holy Ghost, to expatiate on this important subject to thy honour and glory, and to the edification of the faithful assembled here in thy name; it is what we humbly request through thy intercession, O immaculate mother of Jesus, greeting thee for this end with the words of the Angel, *Ave Maria*.

What a melancholy sight was it, my brethren, to behold the Saviour of the world, amidst all the mirth and public demonstrations of joy at his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, giving full way to the tenderness of his heart and bursting out into a flood of tears. A great multitude of people accompanied him on this occasion, some carrying green boughs in their hands, others strewing their garments on the way under his feet, others singing the praises of the Lord and crying out with a loud voice, *Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed be the King of Israel who cometh in the name of the Lord, peace in Heaven and glory in the highest*; but in the midst of all these joyful acclamations Jesus began to weep. No sooner did he behold Jerusalem at a distance, but his heart was overwhelmed with sadness, and his eyes, his beautiful and divine eyes, the sight of which formerly wrought the conversion of so many sinners on earth, and now makes the blessed in Heaven happy, were bathed in tears. If we dive into the cause of this astonishing conduct of our Redeemer, and enquire why the joy of Angels was thus afflicted, he assigns the reason himself, and tells us that he wept over Jerusalem, *because it knew not the time of its visitation*. He bewailed its future destruction; he lamented the blindness and infidelity of the Jews, whose hearts were

harder than the very rocks themselves ; he wept over their unfortunate metropolis, which, after murdering so many holy Prophets, was to be in a short time the theatre of his bloody passion. He hastened towards it, indeed, in triumph, to shew how willing he was to lay down his life for the salvation of mankind, and that he was no way terrified at the foresight of the bitter torments and most ignominious death prepared there for him ; but as if he forgot himself, and was regardless of his own sufferings, he only fixed his eyes and thoughts on Jerusalem ; he considered that that was the last day of mercy and vocation that would be offered to it, and foreseeing the miseries and calamities which its inhabitants were to endure in punishment of their notorious ingratitude and obstinacy, he could not forbear breaking out into sighs and tears. O wonderful charity of our divine Jesus ! His compassion for that sinful city was an emblem of his pity on sinners, and demonstrates his sincere desire of the conversion of those, who, like Jerusalem, are insensible of their own sad condition, rebellious to God's grace, and deaf to the fatherly admonitions whereby he calls them to repentance ; for, in weeping over Jerusalem, we are not to suppose that it was over the stately palaces and holy buildings, but over the people of Jerusalem that Jesus wept. It was over you he wept, O sinners, who let loose the reigns of your unruly passions, who put off your conversion from day to day, and like Jerusalem, neglect the favourable time and the precious moments of your visitation. He wept over you, O wordlings, who are so strangely infatuated with the deceitful charms and fawning pleasures of life, as not to see your folly, not to think of your future misery, nor guard against your approaching ruin ; but be no longer deceived ; unless you be converted to the Lord, the day shall come when your enemies will encompass you on every side, as was the case of Jerusalem ; the day shall come when God's severe justice will overtake you, and cut you off the face of the earth, perhaps in the midst of your career ; the day shall come when legions of infernal spirits will enclose you at the hour of death, in order to hurry you away to endless flames. These were the reflections which made so deep an impression on the tender heart of Jesus, and drew tears from his eyes ; and *did you but know, even at this day*, as the Gospel says, that peace and reconciliation which God offers you, you would also weep and mingle your tears with the tears of Jesus. In effect, to see the Son of God weeping for us sinners, ought to melt our hearts into compunction, and to draw streams of tears from our eyes ; for we must be harder than rocks, and insensible to the highest degree, if we can behold him pouring fourth torrents for our sake, and at the same time remain so callous and unconcerned, as not to drop a single penitential tear to lament and wash away our sins, which afflicted him in so sensible a manner, though it was not his interest, but ours that affected him ; for whether we be saved or

damned, his happiness will neither admit of increase or decrease; but, alas! if we happen to die impenitent, in our sins, we shall be utterly lost and undone for ever, and justly condemned to be the fuel of unquenchable flames. St. John Chrysostom says, that Jesus wept for nothing but for sin. If he could weep now in Paradise, were he still susceptible of grief, and if sorrow was compatible with the glory he possesses in Heaven, he would shed tears in abundance for the multitude of crying mortal sins that are daily and hourly committed on earth. O mortal sin, thou detestable evil, thou infernal monster and foul progeny of hell! how enormous must thou be, since nothing else was able to force sighs from the heart, sobs from the mouth, and tears from the eyes of our sweet Redeemer! I was already convinced of thy enormity by the eternal pains due to thee in hell's devouring flames; but when I consider the deep impression thou hast made, and the effect thou hast produced in the person of my Saviour, I am more fully convinced of thy baseness, and made more sensible of thy grievousness.

The Gospel informs us, that when Jesus went with Mary and Martha to the monument, in order to raise their brother Lazarus to life, he stood over the grave, he sighed, he moaned, he was greatly troubled and touched with sorrow, *he cried out with a loud voice and wept*, John, c. xi. v. 35. But what, do you imagine, troubled and afflicted him in so surprising a manner? O Christians, it was for you and for me that Jesus then wept and moaned; it was for your crying sins, your curses and blasphemies, your debaucheries and criminal excesses, that he was sensibly afflicted. In the person of Lazarus, who was four days dead, buried and corrupted, and who had his hands and feet bound with winding bands, and his face tied with a napkin, he lamented the melancholy state of all inveterate and habitual sinners, whereof Lazarus was a striking figure, and whose unhappy souls lie dead, buried, and infected in the grave of mortal sin, not four days only, but several months and years together, without any serious notion of awaking from their lethargic sleep, or of breaking the fetters and chains that hold them in bondage, and keep them under the tyrannical empire of the devil. It was his compassion for such impenitent sinners, and the fore-knowledge he had of their future misery in hell, that drew these tears from the eyes of our loving Jesus, and almost broke his heart. He foresaw that all his labours and fatigues would prove useless to them, on account of their own obstinacy and hardness of heart; he considered that his precious blood was to be spilt in vain for thousands of sinners, who, through their own perverseness would perish eternally, notwithstanding his bitter death and passion. These reflections made our tender-hearted Redeemer weep when he stood over the monument of Lazarus; they made him also weep when he entered Jerusalem; and again,

when the first scene of his passion commenced in the Garden of Olives. Then, as the Gospel relates, *his soul was sorrowful even unto death*; then, not content to weep for our sins with the eyes nature had furnished him with, he wept and poured forth tears and streams of blood through every pore of his sacred body. Can we think of this, any brethren, without blushing at our own insensibility? Can we reflect that our sins, our crying sins, overwhelmed our Divine Redeemer with such an heavy load of sorrow and affliction, and refuse to join our tears with his?

But, O strange hardness of our stony hearts! We lament what we ought not to lament, and we remain unconcerned for what ought to give us the greatest concern; we repine and grieve immoderately at the loss of a law-suit or of the perishable goods of fortune, and we regret not the loss of God's love and friendship, which is the greatest of all losses. The corporal death of a near relation, of a favourite child, or of a bosom friend, is apt to render many persons inconsolable, says St. Cyprian, whilst the spiritual death of their own souls, lying in the grave of mortal sin, makes little or no impression upon their hearts, though the death of the soul is the greatest evil that can befall a Christian in this life. This was the case of St. Augustine before his conversion; he could not forbear weeping when he read the mournful description that Virgil the Poet gives of the death of the famous Queen Dido; and yet, at the same time, the death of his own soul gave him not the least uneasiness. Hear himself, in the first Book of his Confessions, c. 13. bewailing his folly in the following words: I filled my head, says he, with the wanderings of Aeneas, whilst I forgot my own errors, whereby I wandered away from thee, O Lord, like a strayed sheep in the wilderness. I shed many tears for the death of Dido, who killed herself for love, when, in the mean while, wretched creature as I was, I passed by, with dry eyes, my own self-dying from thee, O my God, my life, and the light of my heart. But, alas! what is more miserable than for one who is in misery to have no commiseration for himself, or to weep for the death of others, and not to lament his own spiritual death, or weep for his sins, which rob his soul of the life of grace?

It was for this reason that our Saviour, carrying his cross on his bleeding shoulders towards Mount Calvary, and seeing some pious women in the crowd weeping and bewailing his condition, he turned towards them and said, Luke, c. xxiii. *Daughters of Jerusalem weep not over me, but weep over yourselves and over your children*; as if he had said, If you have tears to spare, reserve them for another use, shed them for your sins; *for if they do these things in green wood, what will be done in the dry?* If the just are treated with such severity, what will become of the wicked, who like unto dry wood bring forth no fruit, and are only fit to be cast into the

fire to burn? *Behold the day will come, in which it shall be said, Happy they that are barren, and the breasts that have not given suck.* The day will come when the Lord shall reduce the earth into a wilderness, and crush the sinners thereof into pieces; then, ready to sink into the ground with shame, and wishing to hide themselves from the face of their angry Judge, they will begin to lament their unhappy fate, but their lamentations and tears will turn to no account; their prayers and entreaties will be of no service; for the reign of mercy will be expired, and justice alone will sit on the bench. Impenitent sinners, who now refuse to lament their sins with penitential tears, will be confounded, then, at the thoughts of their insensibility and fatal blindness; they will be convinced, by woeful experience, of the dangerous and dreadful consequences of procrastinating their conversion, of abusing God's mercy, of rejecting his gracious calls, and neglecting the favourable time and the precious moments of their visitation.

Jerusalem, unfortunate Jerusalem, thou art a terrible instance hereof! That unhappy city, which was a figure of a sinful soul, had many signal favours conferred upon it. After several holy Prophets had been sent to it in vain, Jesus Christ himself in person vouchsafed to honour it with his presence, his preaching and his miracles. He was pleased to visit it in the days of mercy, and to invite it to repentance with these most affectionate words: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often have I been willing to gather thy children together as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings?* But Jerusalem repaid all these favours with ingratitude; it murdered the Prophets of the Lord, and stoned those to death who were sent to it by the Father of Mercies; it refused obstinately to correspond with God's graces, slighted his merciful invitations to repentance, and neglected the precious time of its visitation; wherefore, God's justice taking place of his mercy, in punishment of its obstinacy, it was delivered over to the fury of its enemies forty days after the passion of our Saviour; so long a time was given unto Jerusalem to repent; that city was besieged, taken, ransacked, burnt, overthrown and leveled with the ground by the Roman Emperors Titus and Vespasian; the magnificent Temple of Solomon was reduced to an heap of rubbish, and of all the lofty towers and palaces not one stone was left upon another.

Thou didst foresee this, O sweetest Jesus, long before it happened; and therefore thou didst weep over Jerusalem, or rather over all impenitent and obstinate sinners, who were prefigured by it; and who, like Jerusalem, are deaf to God's calls, harden their hearts and resist the inspirations of the Holy Ghost; but the day, alas! will come, when they shall learn to their inexpressible sorrow, that the sad disaster of Jerusalem was but a feeble representation of the punishment prepared for them in the scorching flames of hell. *These*

things are now hidden from them, as the Gospel says ; but then their eyes will be opened, and they shall acknowledge when it will be too late, that the visible judgments and scourges that fell on Jerusalem, were scarce a shadow of the dreadful torments reserved in the next life for those who neglect the favourable opportunities that God's infinite goodness affords them to do penance for their sins in this life. I heartily wish, my brethren, that the Lord may preserve you all from ever having an experimental knowledge hereof, and therefore I conjure you to mingle your penitential tears, this day, with the tears of your compassionate and tender-hearted Redeemer. It is better for you to weep in time, than to weep in vain for all eternity in hell. Remember, that one single mortal sin is enough to make a sinner weep for an eternity. Remember, that one single tear now will avail you more, than a whole torrent of tears will avail you hereafter. Let the world then rejoice, its joy will terminate in sorrow. Do you grieve and weep for your sins, and your grief will be changed into joy, John, c. xvi. Tears, like the tears of David, says St. John Chrysostom, are able to quench the flames of hell ; they are a most powerful means to move the Father of Mercies to wash away, with his divine grace, the blackest stains of your sins, and to render your souls as white as the driven snow. He calls upon you, this day, to return to him without further delay ; his arms are open to embrace you ; his head is bowed down to give you the kiss of peace ; his side is open to give you admittance to his loving heart. Let me then entreat you to harden your hearts no longer, but to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to invoke him while he is near unto you, Isai. c. lv. Perhaps this very time is the precious moment of your visitation ; perhaps it is the happy moment that Heaven has destined from all eternity for your conversion, O unfortunate sinners, who for several years past have been entangling yourselves in a labyrinth of criminal disorders ; perhaps this is the last call that will be given you, and the last time that an offer of mercy, grace and salvation, will be ever made to you. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ; O sinful soul, be therefore sincerely and speedily converted to the Lord your God. Be converted, he says, through the mouth of the Prophet Ezechiel, c. xxxi. v. 21. Be converted from your evil ways ; and why will you die, O house of Israel ? Your conversion will edify the Church militant on earth, and cause joy among the Angels in the Church triumphant in Heaven ; for, as the Gospel assures us, there is more joy in Heaven before the Angels of God, over one sinner that does penance, than over ninety-nine just who stand not in need of penance, Luke, c. xv. v. 7. Jesus Christ, your Divine Redeemer, declares, Mat. ix. that he did not come to call the just, but sinners, to repentance ; and compares himself to a shepherd, who, having lost one of his sheep went in search of it, and having found it

after a diligent pursuit, brought it home to his flock upon his own shoulders, with more joy than what he felt at the safety of ninety-nine other sheep which he left in the desert. After all this, who can ever despair of God's mercy? Far from giving up to despondence, my brethren, *though your crimes should happen to be as red as scarlet, or as numerous as the sands of the sea*, throw yourselves with an entire trust and confidence into the arms of his tender mercy; approach him in the person of his representatives here on earth, and water his feet with tears of compunction, flowing from a contrite and humbled heart. He is the very fountain of all goodness and sweetness, infinitely rich in every perfection, but *particularly rich in mercy*, Eph. c. ii. v. 4. If you be weak, his grace is strong; if your prayers be unworthy, when they are joined with his mediation, and put up in his name, you may be sure of finding acceptance with his eternal Father. If your sins be many and grievous, his sacred blood is of infinite value, and sufficient to cancel the sins of ten thousand worlds. If you be undeserving of any favour yourselves, there is no favour which God can grant but what he has merited for you; there is no blessing but what you may obtain through his merits by a strong confidence in him, and an humble diffidence in yourselves.

O merciful Jesus, who never forsakest those who put their whole trust in thee, we repose our trust in thee, and hope that thou wilt not suffer us to be eternally miserable, since thou art infinitely good. Preserve us, we beseech thee, from rejecting thy graces, or frustrating the designs of thy mercy through our own obstinacy and perverseness. Grant us the grace of a sincere contrition for our past transgressions, and of a faithful perseverance in thy service during the remainder of our life, that nothing either in life or death may ever separate us from thee, or prevent our admission into the sacred mansions of heavenly Jerusalem, which thou hast purchased for us with the price of thy blood, and the enjoyment of which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the dangerous Sin of Pride and Vain-Glory.

Omnis qui se exaltat, humiliabitur; et qui se humiliat exaltabitur.

Luk. c. xiii. v. 14.

Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

St. Luke, c. xiii. v. 14.

THERE is no virtue more admired, esteemed, and recommended than humility, and no vice more condemned and decried in the sacred Scriptures than the opposite vice of pride; yet no virtue is less practised than true Christian humility, and no vice more common than that of pride. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, recorded in this day's Gospel, plainly shews the pernicious effects of pride in the one, and the salutary effects of humility in the other. These two men, as our Blessed Saviour tells us, went up to the Temple of Jerusalem to pray; but O strange contrast! the Pharisee, instead of prostrating himself in the presence of the Almighty God, as a criminal, with a feeling sense of his own unworthiness and misery, stood upright in the Temple, with an air of confidence and arrogance, and began to sound his own praise and plead his own merits. Instead of making an humble confession of his faults, which the pride of his heart concealed from him, he recited a long catalogue of the good works he had done, and was so taken up with the thoughts of his own righteousness, that he regarded the rest of men with contempt and disdain, particularly the poor Publican, whom he despised in his own heart as an unworthy sinner. *My God I give thee thanks*, said he, *that I am not like the rest of men, extortioners, unjust dealers, adulterers, nor such as this publican.* On the contrary, the publican sued for pardon by a sincere acknowledgment of his guilt. Though he ventured to come into the Temple of God, he kept at a distance from the Sanctuary, and prostrated himself in the most submissive posture, without even presuming to lift up his eyes to Heaven, but knocked his breast with sorrow, and supplicated for mercy and pardon of his sins in the following words: *O God, be merciful to me a sinner.* What was the consequence? His humble petition pierced through the clouds of Heaven in an instant, and he was received into favour, and returned home justified, whilst the presuming saint, who was puffed up

with a favourable opinion of his own merits, and boasted of his imaginary virtues, was despised, rejected and condemned by the Son of God, who repeatedly declares in the Gospel, *that every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* To excite you to a just abhorrence and detestation of the dangerous sin of pride and vain-glory, and to the love and practice of the opposite virtue of humility, is the design of the following discourse, wherein I shall endeavour to shew you, that as no vice is more odious to God or more pernicious to man than pride, so no virtue is more acceptable to God, or more salutary to man than humility. Let us first implore the divine assistance, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, who on account of her profound humility, was exalted to the super-eminent dignity of the Mother of God. *Ave Maria.*

Pride, according to the description that St. Augustine gives of it, L. 14. de Civ. c. 13. is an inordinate self-love or complacency in one's own self, that makes a person refer every thing to himself, and have nothing in view but self-exaltation and self esteem instead of attaching himself to God, and referring all things to his honour and glory. This sin is justly ranked at the head of the seven capital sins, because it is an universal sin, the poisonous source and root of all sin, and makes an essential ingredient of the malice of every other sin. The Scriptures calls it *the beginning of all sin*, and says, *that it is hateful before God, and that he that holdeth it shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end,* Eccles. c. x. v. 7, 15. For this reason, the venerable old Tobias gave his son the following advice: *Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words, for from it all perdition took its beginning.* When it is not resisted, but wilfully cherished in the heart, and suffered to reign in the soul without controul, it is looked upon by spiritual writers to be one of the most evident marks of reprobation, as it is one of the greatest obstacles to God's grace, and of course, the most dangerous enemy of our souls. What renders it of all other crimes the most odious, the most detestable and offensive in the sight of God is, the extreme opposition it bears to the Glory of God; for the proud withdraw themselves in their own idea from the subjection they owe to God, and upon the essential dependance which they have upon him; they stand upon their own bottom, as if they had no need of him, and could do without him; they affect a self-excellence, which belongs to God alone, and which is as essential to God as his self-existence and independence. *They fall off from God,* says Eccles. c. x. v. 14. *and their heart departs from him that made them.* By this rebellion they separate themselves from the principle of all that is good, and instead of giving all honour and glory to him alone, to whom all praise and glory are due, they pretend to rival God and attribute the pure

effects of his bounty and liberality to their own merit, if not in express terms, at least in the pride of their own hearts, and in the whole tenor of their conduct. Thus they set themselves up, as it were, in the throne of God, and Satan-like invade God's right, dispute his prerogative, and by looking on his gifts as their own property, they attempt to rob him of that glory which essentially belongs to him, and of which he is so jealous that he declares, through the mouth of the Prophet Isaias, c. xlii. v. 8. *I the Lord, this is my name, I will not give my glory to another.*

This made St. Augustine cry out, in c. 16. of his *Soliloquies*: "He, O Lord, who seeks not thy glory, but his own, in the good he does, and desires to be praised for thy gifts, is a robber, and resembles the devil himself, who pretended to rob thee of thy glory." But God, who severely punished pride in his Angels, will not tolerate it in man, who is but a lump of clay and a handful of dust and ashes. Nay, he seems to take pleasure in defeating the projects of the proud and high-minded, who thus appropriate to themselves his incommunicable prerogative, by withdrawing his hand from them, and permitting them sometimes, through an effect of his justice, to fall openly into shameful disorders, in order to pull down their pride and arrogance. How odious pride is in his sight, appears evidently from the fall of Lucifer and his apostate confederates, who, instead of meriting an increase of happiness, by paying unto the Lord the homage of their adoration, and referring the gifts of nature and grace with which they were adorned, to the great Source and Principle of Perfection, forfeited the glory of Heaven through their own fault, and were doomed to the gloomy regions of hell, because they proudly valued themselves on their dazzling beauty and excellent gifts, as if they had not received them from God, but had them from themselves, Isaias, c. xiv. v. 13. The dreadful judgments denounced against Pharaoh, King of Egypt, Exod. c. v. v. 1. against Nabuchodonosor, King of Babylon, Dan. c. iv. v. 27. and against Sennacherib, King of Assyria, Isaias, c. xxxvii. v. 10. 36. to punish whose pride an Angel, sent from Heaven, slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand of his army in one night, are manifest proofs of the hatred that the Almighty bears to the proud, who attribute to themselves the good qualifications they possess, and who value themselves and seek to be esteemed, praised and honoured on that account, instead of referring all to God and giving glory to him who is the Author of all good, and to whom alone all praise, glory and honour are due for ever and ever, 1 Tim. c. i. v. 17. Every proud man, who, thus forgetful of God, exults in the fumes of his own supposed excellency and perfection, and glories in himself, as if his riches, power, strength, valour, knowledge and beauty were his own property, to be solely attributed to his merit, industry, courage and conduct, is an abomination to the Lord, as the wise man says, c. xvi. v. 4.

St. Gregory, in his 23d Book of Morals, distinguishes four different branches of pride, which are diametrically opposite to the four distinguishing characters of humility. The four branches of pride are ambition, presumption, vain-glory and hypocrisy. They are called the daughters of pride, and are the different ways that this odious and pernicious vice shews itself. That branch of pride which is called *Vain-glory*, because it has for its object an imaginary excellence in the way of glory, that is, in the way of being known, admired, praised and esteemed by others, is the fruitful parent of a numerous offspring of other pernicious evils. This was the darling vice of the Scribes and Pharisees; this was the idol of their hearts, to which they sacrificed their fasts, their prayers, and their alms-deeds. They performed all their outward works of piety and devotion that they might be seen, honoured and esteemed by men; for which reason our Blessed Saviour pronounced so many dreadful woes against them in the Gospel, and declared that they were entitled to no other recompense but what they had received here, the empty breath of sinners, the vain, precarious praises and applauses of the unthinking multitude, Mat. c. vi. v. 5. Such is the malignity of the sin of pride and vain-glory, and so pernicious are its effects, that it robs a man in the sight of God of the merit and reward of all his good works; it corrupts the very vitals of the soul, and leaves nothing sound in it; it poisons the root of every virtue, and like unto a worm corrodes and eats up the substance of the very best actions. St. Basil compares it to an insidious thief, that lies in wait for good works in order to destroy their value and merit. Other writers compar'd it to a snake, that creeps insensibly into the soul, lurks unnoticed in the inmost recesses of the heart, and as St. Gregory remarks, often hides itself under sackcloth and ashes. Nothing is to be dreaded more by pious Christians, in the performance of their spiritual duties and devotional exercises. The greater progress they have made in the way of perfection, the more they are exposed to this vice, and the greater danger they are in of forfeiting their crown and losing the fruit of all their labours, unless they be constantly upon their guard to resist the suggestions of pride and vain-glory. Other vices are the vices of sinners, have something evil for their object, and are not to be gratified but by the perpetration of wicked actions; but this vice chiefly arises from objects that are good, and as it first began among the Angels, it usually attacks heavenly souls, and is one of the most subtle and most delicate temptations that the enemy of mankind makes use of to insinuate a deadly poison into the secret foldings of their hearts. He takes no extraordinary pains to tempt notorious profligates and scandalous libertines, as he thinks he is sure of them, and expects that they will of course fall one day into his hands, and become an easy prey to his malice; but when he sees Christians devoted to the service of God, intent

on the practice of good works, and standing fair for a never-fading Crown of Glory in the kingdom of Heaven, he sets all his engines at work, and artfully spreads the net of pride and vain-glory in order to ensnare their souls, and strip them at once of all the spiritual riches of grace and virtue, which they have been accumulating for several years. He knows it would be to no purpose to tempt them to fall into glaring and palpable crimes, and therefore he endeavours to infect and vitiate their virtues and good-works with the bane of vain-glory. He endeavours to fill them with a presumptuous opinion of their own merits, and to persuade them that they are not like the rest of mankind; that they have not been guilty of any gross crimes, like many others in the world; that they have served the Lord faithfully for several years, and consequently that they have a right to expect great rewards from him in Heaven. There is not a more evident proof of pride than to imagine ourselves to be out of the reach of it; they are often most guilty of it who do not believe themselves to be proud. Other crimes are apt to stare men in the face, and disgust them by their deformity at the first sight; but this subtle and pestiferous vice steals upon them almost imperceptibly, and deceives them in such a manner, that as St. Thomas of Villanova remarks, they are often full of it up to their very eyes, without being sensible of it themselves. It is the first vice that generally attacks those who apply themselves to a virtuous life, and the last that leaves them; it is born with us, and closely twisted and interwoven with our corrupt nature, and mankind is so strongly inclined to it, that most persons are more or less guilty of it. We have received it by inheritance from our first parents, and it is the most deeply rooted and the most dangerous of all the spiritual maladies and wounds that original sin has inflicted on human nature. Where is the man that does not feel in himself a violent bent and fondness for admiration and praise? Where is the man who is entirely exempt from self-complacency and self-love? Where is the man who is not pleasing in his own eyes, and who is not desirous of being pleasing to others? A little applause, though never so undeserved, is apt to exalt some people in their own conceit, and to swell them with vanity; pride being a passion of that strange nature that will feed upon almost every little trifle, and upon mere empty shadows, appearances and imaginary excellencies, when it has nothing real or solid to subsist on. It insinuates itself under a thousand shapes and forms; it even covers itself sometimes with the cloak of humility, and makes men proud of humility itself. How many will you not find in the very midst of Christianity, who, under the mask of an apparent humility, are idolaters of themselves and dupes of a subtle refined pride? They are humble in their words but in their hearts they are puffed up and elated with such an idea of their own imaginary perfections, that they cannot endure the least contradiction, or

bear to be slighted or treated with the smallest disrespect or inattention. *Tange montes et fumigabunt.* They are all mildness, and pictures of forbearance as long as they are not thwarted; but if you offend their delicacy, the mask will disappear, and their anger will begin to vent itself without restraint. Others will to boast of their talents and abilities, and pretend to be versed in every science; but with all their boasted knowledge, they are strangers to the very first elements of true wisdom, since they are ignorant of themselves and vainly think they are something, whereas they are nothing, as the Apostle speaks, Galat. c. vi. v. 3. They are active, restless, and bustling; they aspire presumptuously to exploits beyond their sphere, and are fond of such works and employments as attract public applause and esteem, the two darlings of human pride, to which they sacrifice their cares and occupations, and which they unhappily make the last end of all their pursuits. Others are obstinate, positive, contentious, and extremely attached to their own will and judgment; they are full of envy, jealousy, bitterness and indignation against those who are preferred before themselves, or shewn greater marks of honour and esteem, considering their good qualities as a diminution of their own supposed excellence; they censure and judge them rashly, misconstrue their virtuous actions, and give them a malicious turn. Like the censorious Pharisees, they discern a mote in a brother's eye, as the Gospel says, at the same time that they do not perceive a beam in their own; they are filled with scorn, disdain and contempt for their neighbour, and clear-sighted in discovering his failings and imperfections, but blind to their own real faults, and to the many evil dispositions that spring from the pride and corruption of their hearts.

It is only the all-powerful hand of God that can cure us of these dreadful evils, and entirely root the pernicious vice of pride, with its various branches out of the soul; we should, therefore, frequently implore the assistance of his divine grace by fervent prayer, and labour incessantly on our part to check the pride of our hearts, and to stifle the flattering delusions of self-love by a profound humility; we should watch carefully over our interior, and beware of attributing to our own merits the gifts that we have received gratis from the pure bounty of our Maker. *What has thou,* says St. Paul, *that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* 1 Cor. c. iv. v. 7. and again, 2 Cor. c. 10. *He that glories, let him glory in the Lord,* who, in crowning our good works, crowns his own gifts and the effects of his grace, according to St. Augustine. Instead of entertaining any vain self-complacency in our hearts, or in our minds, we should gratefully acknowledge our own indigence and dependence on him in all things, and remember, that *the more we have received, the more shall be required of us.* We should enter into the humble sentiments of the Apostle, who says, *what I am, I am*

by the grace of God; and cry out with the Royal Prophet, Ps. cxliii. v. 9. not to us, O Lord, but to thy holy name, may all praise, honour and glory be given. In him only we are to confide, and not in ourselves, or in our own righteousness, as the proud Pharisee did. In all our works we are to seek only to please him and do his holy will, in imitation of Christ our Lord, who never sought his own glory, or the praise of men, but did all his works with the most pure intention, for the honour and glory of his heavenly Father, Jo. c. viii. v. 49, 54. Humility was his favourite virtue, and ought to be the favourite virtue of every Christian. He came from Heaven to teach us humility by his example as well as by his doctrine; in every stage of his life we meet with lessons of humility. Learn of me, he says, Mat. c. xi. v. 29. to be meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. To inculcate the excellency, and to enforce the necessity of this amiable virtue in the most striking manner, when his disciples were disputing among themselves for pre-eminence, and, and asked him who was the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, he called to him a little child, and having placed him in the midst of them, he said, Amen, I say unto you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven; whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself like this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, Mat. c. xviii. v. 3, 4. O Almighty God, who resisteth the proud and givest thy grace to the humble, inspire us with a just abhorrence of the destructive vice of pride, and excite us to the love and practice of the opposite virtue of humility, that we may be favoured with thy grace here, and inherit thy glory hereafter. Which is the happiness, my brethren, that I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

On the Sin of Detraction.

Jesus tetigit linguam ejus, et suspiciens in Cælum ingemuit.

Marc. c. vii. v. 34.

Jesus touched his tongue, and looking up to Heaven, he sighed.

Mark, c. vii. v. 34.

THE subject of this day's Gospel is an illustrious miracle, wrought by our Blessed Redeemer in favour of a man who was both deaf and dumb. The Son of God, pitying his condition,

and taking him aside from the crowd, put his fingers into the ears of this poor man, and touched his tongue with a little spittle; then looking up to Heaven, from whence all blessings descend, he sighed, and commanded the mouth and the ears of the dumb and deaf man to be opened; and immediately, his ears being opened, and the string of his tongue being loosed, he recovered the perfect use of his hearing and of his speech, to the great astonishment of the multitude then present, whom our Saviour, willing to give us an example of humility, charged not to publish the miracle they were eye-witnesses of; but the more he recommended silence to them, the more their zeal prompted them to publish it, and to proclaim the praises of Jesus Christ, crying out with a loud voice, *He hath done all things well; he hath made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.* Here we see the use of sacred ceremonies, approved and authorized by the example of Christ himself. In curing this man, as well as the man who had been born blind, Jo. c. xi. v. 6. what a number of ceremonies did he make use of, and for what end? A single word from him was fully sufficient for the purpose of curing both the one and the other; but as his actions are recorded for our example, we have his sacred authority in approbation of the holy ceremonies used by the Church upon different occasions. The very ceremony he used in curing the deaf and dumb man, mentioned in this day's Gospel, is taken from his example, and is still retained and observed in the administration of baptism, to signify, that by the grace of baptism the ears of our soul are opened to hear the word of God and the inspirations of his Holy Spirit, and that by obeying his divine will, manifested to us by this means, we are to become a *good odour of Christ*, 2 Cor. c. ii. v. 15. by our good example and edifying conversation.

Yet, alas! how many Christians are there to be found, who, in open violation of the covenant and sacred obligations of their baptism, dishonour and disgrace the Christian name by their disorderly conduct and scandalous conversation? They may, indeed be said to resemble in some respect the dumb and deaf man spoken of in the Gospel, as they are, in a moral sense, not only dumb but likewise deaf; for they are silent when the honour and glory of God, and the edification of their neighbour, call on them to speak out and make a proper use of the gift of speech. They are deaf to the inspirations of God, and to the clamours of a guilty conscience, inviting them to open their mouths in fervent prayer and implore mercy and pardon of their sins by a sincere repentance. They neglect to employ their tongues for such salutary purposes, whilst they unhappily make them subservient to the most odious vices, and instrumental to the most horrid crime of cursing, swearing, blaspheming, and abusing the adorable name of the Lord their God. How frequently are their tongues employed in spreading the *infection and odour of death*, and in calumniating and

detracting their neighbours? It is on the pernicious and destructive sin of detraction that I intend to expatiate in the following discourse, in order to excite you to a just abhorrence and detestation of so foul a vice, by shewing you how offensive it is to God, how injurious to our neighbour, and how detrimental to the detractor himself. In short, detraction is highly offensive to God, and injurious to man. This shall be the subject of the first point. Detraction is highly detrimental to the detractor himself, and attended with consequences extremely dangerous and almost irreparable. This shall be the subject of the second point. Let us previously implore the divine aid and unction of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin. *Ave Maria.*

Detraction is an unjust defamation of our neighbour, or a blackening of another person's character in his absence. It is called *Detraction*, not because it detracts from the truth, but as St. Thomas of Aquin observes, because it detracts, derogates, and takes from our neighbour's reputation, by lessening the esteem and good opinion others have of him; a man's reputation being as effectually lessened and lost by publishing the crimes he has actually committed, as those he has not. To discover the hidden faults of others, when it is necessary for their amendment and conversion, or for the instruction and precaution of those who are in danger of being considerably damaged or corrupted by their wicked principles, bad example, company and conversation, is not detraction but fraternal correction, provided it be done, not out of anger, malice, hatred, or envy, but with a good intention and through a motive of charity and justice, to prevent their ruin and destruction. Thus the Patriarch Joseph, for the amendment of his brothers, discovered their wickedness to his father Jacob, Gen. c. xxxvii. Mardocheus manifested the conspiracy of Bagathan and Thares, Esther, ii. St. Paul also notified the impiety of Alexander the copper-smith, lest the innocent might be defrauded and deceived by him, Ephes. c. ii. v. 4. and Christ himself published the malice and hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, to precaution his disciples from following their example. All kinds of false testimonies, calumnies and detractions, are forbidden by the eighth commandment. False testimonies were punished in the Mosaic Law, by inflicting the same penalty on the false witness which he would have brought on his neighbour had he been really guilty, and had the fact been fully proved against him, Deut. c. xix. v. 19. The very Pagans themselves held the crime of bearing false witness in such abhorrence, that they punished it with death, as appears from the practice of the ancient Romans, who condemned false witnesses to be cast headlong down from the Tarpeian Rock. Detraction differs from contumely, as theft differs from robbery; for contumely attacks a person's good name openly and before his face, but the base and cowardly vice of detraction stabs his reputation

secretly and behind his back, without allowing him the opportunity of self-defence. Detraction differs also from calumny or slander; for calumny is a false accusation, whereby a person is charged with a crime he is really innocent of, as was the case of the virtuous Joseph, mentioned in the Book of Genesis, and of the chaste Susanna, spoken of in the Book of Daniel; but detraction is committed by divulging, without necessity the private and hidden crimes a person has been really guilty of, or by exposing some considerable defect that tends to his prejudice. This vice betrays a great corruption of heart, and commonly arises from a certain degree of pride and envy, which makes men blind to their own faults, and clear-sighted to discover faults in others; for a man of a depraved heart is apt to look at others through the medium of his own passions, and to judge them to be evil because he is evil himself. Like unto those vile insects and noxious flies, which delight to dwell always on filth and corruption, the detractor makes the crimes and infirmities of his neighbours his favourite topic and the ordinary subject of his conversation; he pretends, like the Pharisee in the Gospel, to see a mote in his brother's eye, at the same time that he does not perceive the beam in his own eye.

Charity judges favourably of all men, has compassion for their failings, and excuses their intentions when it cannot excuse their actions. It seeks rather the salvation than the defamation of a neighbour, and studies to conceal and diminish, rather than to propagate and augment scandal; it usually declares on the favourable side of mercy, and evinces a dignity and greatness of soul in taking the unfortunate under protection. Detraction, on the contrary, evinces a total want of every liberal, noble and generous sentiment; it sports with a neighbour's misfortune, and exults at his downfall; it blackens him with odious aspersions, and propagates scandalous hearsays and reports in order to expose him to contempt, disgrace, and ridicule. The bee extracts honey out of the most bitter flowers; but the detractor takes a bad meaning out of things that are highly commendable and really praise-worthy in themselves. He puts a malicious construction on the very best actions, depreciates the most amiable qualities, and turns the virtues of his neighbour into vices. He feels a secret pleasure in speaking freely of the faults and imperfections of others wherever he goes, particularly when he has, or thinks he has truth on his side, and by this means he becomes the unhappy cause of numberless quarrels, divisions and animosities. In short, he sets neighbours at variance with each other, he sows discord in families, and disunites the most intimate friends, and arms brother against brother and husband against wife. May I not, then, justly apply what St. James says, in chap. iii. of his Catholic Epistle, v. 6. and 8. to the tongue of a detractor? *It is a devouring fire, a world of iniquity, an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison.* It spares nothing, whether sacred or profane,

but discharges its fury on the good grain and on the chaff, on the prince and on the subject, on the ecclesiastic and on the layman, leaving ruin and desolation wherever it passes. It penetrates into the earth, to root up what has been buried in oblivion, and it seeks, in the ashes of the dead, the faults which have been already cancelled in the sight of God by tears of repentance, and which time has effaced out of the memory of men. There is no mischief that can be thought of, says St. John Chrysostom, but the tongue of a detractor is productive of; for which reason the Holy Scripture cautions us in the strongest terms *to refrain our tongues from detraction*, Wisdom, c. i. v. 11. and expressly declares, that *detractors are odious in the sight of God*, and that *the whisperer, the tattler, and the double-tongued are accursed, because they trouble many that are in peace*, Eccles. xxi. *Their words are smoother than oil*, says the Royal Prophet, Ps. liv. *and in the end they are darts*, which, like the sting in the serpent's tail, carry poison with them, and wound the deeper the more they are disguised; and again, Ps. v. *their mouth is an open sepulchre*, which exhales a contagious infection, and their tongues resemble a sharp-whetted sword, that destroys the reputation and civil life of many, whose conduct in other respects is regular, virtuous, and edifying. St. James concludes, therefore, that *if any one imagines himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, this man's religion is vain*, c. i. v. 26.

The Prophet Jeremy gives us a pathetic description of the damages done by a detracting tongue, under the figure of a fertile olive tree, beautiful to the sight, both for the number of its branches and the quantity and quality of its fruit; but being set on fire by a few sparks carried to it by a blast of wind, all its branches were in a short time consumed, its beauty soon perished, and all its fruit was destroyed. This olive tree is a figure or representation of an upright just man, of a prudent virtuous woman, of an exemplary pious ecclesiastic, of an honest conscientious tradesman. How great soever their virtue may be, how regular soever their conduct, however strictly honest their dealings, a blast of wind carries fire to the olive tree, and consumes in a moment all its leaves, branches and fruit; that is to say, a few words of a detracting tongue blast their reputation and brand them with infamy. Who would believe it, says St. Bernard, that so small a thing as a word of detraction could cause such a dreadful havoc? Yes, my brethren, gunpowder that has taken fire may be as well confined as detraction, or a restraint may be as well put on the sea when the banks are broken down; for when detraction has once passed the lips, it flies like a flash of lightning, but still it fails not to make deep and mortal wounds. The detracted person is immediately reduced to a state of civil death. He becomes like unto a dead member in the community, says St. Francis of Sales. He sinks into an object of infamy and public contempt,

a sport for some, a pity for others. He is torn within and without; within a prey to his own remorse, without a butt to the satires and censures of men. The sun only rises to enlighten his shame, to let him see the remains of his shattered character, and to bear the dishonour and disgrace of it; so that it were better for him to have been blackened by calumny than to have been defamed by detraction, for calumny is often for the falsely-accused a subject of triumph, and a wound more easily healed; the shame frequently rebounds on the calumniator who first gave birth to the malicious report. Time clears up the matter; the falsehood is detected and refuted; the truth is made manifest, and injured innocence, like gold that is tried by the fire, appears with more lustre than before. Nay, even though the calumny could not be refuted, it might be despised. The assured testimony of a good conscience can revenge itself of the vain and ill-grounded discourses that are daily spread in the world, and it is always an advantage and a comfort to a calumniated Christian, to be able to say within himself, that he is innocent in the sight of God of what is laid to his charge; but in detraction there is no such resource; there is no means to recall it, no effectual remedy to repair the damage. A reputation once ruined by detraction, can scarce ever be recovered; it is a wound almost incurable. Do you wonder, then, that St. Bernard calls *detraction a very grievous crime; grande crimen detractio*, that stands in direct opposition, not only to the great precept of fraternal charity, but also to natural justice and equity; for, let a man's private conduct be what it may, he has a just title to a fair and reputable character as long as he is not convicted of any public offence; till he makes the public witnesses to his crime he is accountable to God alone, and amenable only to the divine tribunal. Whoever, then, discovers his secret crimes, without a just cause or pressing necessity, he is guilty of an injustice far greater, far more cruel, than if by fraud and violence he robbed him of his money or temporal substance; for what is worldly substance when put in competition with a fair character? Is not a fair character the most valuable of all temporal blessings? *Is not a good name preferable to much riches?* as the Scripture says in ch. xii. of the Book of Proverbs. It may lead the poorest and the most destitute of men to the acquisition of wealth, but a character once lost is not to be re-purchased with all the treasures of the earth. I leave yourselves, then, to judge what an injury, what a flaming act of injustice it is, to deprive a person by detraction of that which is in itself so valuable. Can any theft or robbery be comparable to this? says St. Ambrose. Moreover, if the person detracted has already cancelled his secret crimes in the sight of God, by abundant tears of contrition, is it not unjust, uncharitable and cruel to the last degree, to revive and publish them in the eyes of the world? Yes, my brethren, carry this truth with you: He that was yesterday a sinner, may be a

saint this day; and the moment that publishes his crimes, is often the moment of mercy which completes his conversion. Remember what is recorded of the penitent Magdalen. The proud Pharisee reproached her with her crimes, and yet in that very instant her love and her tears effaced them at the feet of her Divine Redeemer. May I not, then, justly conclude that detraction is a manifest breach of charity, an open violation of justice, and an odious vice in its own nature, highly offensive to God and very injurious to man? It is likewise highly detrimental to the detractor himself, and attended with consequences extremely dangerous and almost irreparable. This is what I promised to shew you in the second point.

To convince you how hurtful and dangerous the sin of detraction is to the detractor himself, it might be sufficient to observe, that it is numbered by St. Paul amongst those capital crimes which render men hateful to God, and exclude them from ever inheriting the kingdom of Heaven, unless they be expiated by a true and sincere repentance, Rom. c. i. v. 30. 1 Cor. c. xv. It is, therefore, of its own nature a grievous mortal sin, that causes the spiritual death of the soul of the detractor, and entails eternal death and damnation on it hereafter. What is more, it is often the unhappy occasion of the spiritual death of the person detracted, on account of the hatred and passion of revenge it excites in his heart against the detractor; nay, the detractor is also accessary to the spiritual death of the criminal accomplices and partakers of his guilt, who concur and join with him in encouraging and propagating the detraction. This made St. Bernard on Psalm lvi. call *the detractors tongues a two-edged, nay, a three-edged sword, with which he commits three murders at one stroke*. First, he murders his own soul when he wounds his neighbour's reputation. Secondly, he murders the character of the person he detracts, as he destroys that civil life by which he lived fair in the esteem of others; a life more dear to men of honour and probity, than the life of the body. Thirdly, he murders the souls of those who give ear with pleasure to the detraction, and encourage, spread, and keep it alive; for whoever encourages and gives ear to a detractor, is equally criminal with him. Nay, St. Bernard says he knows not which of the two merits damnation the most, the detractor or the listener, since both have the devil in them, the one in his mouth, the other in his ears. O, how many crimes are there then united in this one crime! and how extremely difficult must it be to make reparation for all the mischief and damages caused by it? Yet, without this reparation, there is no pardon to be obtained; for detractors are no less strictly obliged to repair the damages done by their means, than thieves and robbers are bound to restore the property of their neighbour which they have unjustly acquired. The only difference is, that detractors labour under far greater difficulties in the discharge of this duty, than they do who only strip others of

the external goods of fortune, and that for two reasons. First, Because the damage done by detraction is so extensive that it can scarce be repaired. Secondly, Because the weakness of the detractor is such, that he can scarce gain on himself to make a due reparation. Such are the dangerous consequences of detraction. The infamy of the detracted neighbour increases in proportion to the number of persons to whom his or her private failings have been disclosed. The scandal augments continually; each one repeating the same story, will be apt to add something of his own invention, and to set it off in a more disadvantageous light. Though discovered at first to one only person, it spreads farther every day, like unto a little brook, which the farther it runs the larger it continually grows, until at length it becomes a great river, or like that spark of fire mentioned by St. James, which in the beginning appears very inconsiderable, but in a short time consumes the greatest buildings, and spreads ruin and desolation on every side. How difficult, then, must it be for the detractor to repair the injury he has done, and to heal all the wounds his envenomed tongue has inflicted? The sins of a whole multitude are his sins, and he may be said to detract with as many mouths and as many tongues, as through his means co-operate to destroy the reputation of his neighbour. How will he be able to expiate such evils? How will he disabuse all those to whose ears his malicious report has reached, and is to reach after his death; for it is to be observed, that the scandal does not always die with the detractor, but often survives him, so that when his detracting tongue will lie buried in the grave, the reputation he blasted will be still destroyed on earth.

But though the detractor should be able to repair the reputation he has blasted, by proclaiming his own rashness, and publishing to the world the malice and injustice of his aspersions, is it easy to gain so far on himself as to resolve on such a publication? And yet to clear his injured neighbour's character, and make a full reparation of the wrong he has done him, he must swallow down all this confusion, and assume the odious titles of a liar, impostor and calumniator, in case he has, in reality, belied his neighbour. But where are the true penitents to be found, who are willing to submit to such an humiliation? How few will be persuaded to do what lies in their power on this occasion? It requires no small stock of humility to retract what one has said, and though it should be done, few will believe the retraction. This shews how dangerous a sin it is, and how difficult the reparation of the damage thereby occasioned is rendered by human pride. What is still a convincing proof that it is extremely difficult, mortifying and painful to flesh and blood to retract, after having detracted, and to sacrifice one's own good name in order to re-establish that of another, is this, that nothing in the world is more frequent than detraction,

nothing more rare than retraction. Mankind is strongly addicted to this vice, says St. Jerom. It unhappily infests all states, ranks and conditions, insomuch, that even those who have retired to a great distance from other vices, fall into the sin of detraction as into the last snare of the devil. Who is there amongst us, who has not a thousand times heard the character of his neighbour torn and mangled in conversation? and yet seldom or never has any detractor returned to undeceive us and make a due reparation, though the obligation is so strict that no power on earth can exempt the delinquent from it, and so pressing that it should by no means be deferred, delays herein being particularly prejudicial.

Since, therefore, detraction is so odious and so dangerous a vice, let me entreat you, my brethren, to guard most carefully against all the different ways it is committed, and the various cloaks with which it is often artfully disguised. *Take heed*, says the Scripture, Eccles. c. xxviii. v. 30. *lest perhaps you sin by your tongue, and your fall become incurable unto death.* We are even cautioned in the Holy Scripture against keeping company with detractors. *My son*, says the Holy Ghost, Prov. c. xxiv. *have nothing to do with detractors, for their destruction shall rise suddenly.* And again, *Surround thy ears with thorns, and hearken not to a wicked tongue. Make a door for thy mouth, and locks for thy ears. Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour, let it die within thee,* Eccles. c. xix. v. 10.

O Divine Jesus! infuse into our hearts the spirit of true charity, that we may never lessen our neighbour's reputation by detraction or slander. Give us grace to govern our tongues, to be watchful over all our words, to avoid rash judgments and malicious reflections, and to walk with circumspection in the way of thy commandments, that after promoting thy honour and glory, and edifying our neighbour here on earth, both by word and example, we may have the happiness to see and enjoy thee hereafter for all eternity in the sacred mansions of bliss. Which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Love of God and of our Neighbour.

Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et proximum tuum
sicut te ipsum. Luc. c. x. v. 27.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and thy neighbour
as thyself.* Luke, c. x. v. 27,

AS the sun was created to give light, and the fire to communicate heat, the water to refresh, the air to breath, the earth to produce its fruits, and these fruits to nourish man, so man himself was created to love and serve the Lord his God. He has made us for himself, says St. Augustine, and our hearts will be always restless until they repose in him, as the only amiable object that is able to satiate our boundless desires, and render us completely happy. Experience has convinced thousands of this great truth, and taught them, that even in this life no real content or true happiness is to be found but in loving and serving God. The virtue by which we love God above all things is called Charity, and is ranked by St. Paul in the first place amongst the theological virtues, that regard God as their immediate and primary object. *Faith, Hope, Charity, these three*, says the Apostle, *but the greatest of them is Charity.* Faith and Hope will cease after this life, but Charity shall subsist for all eternity, to be the glory and joy of the blessed inhabitants of heavenly Jerusalem. Charity is usually stiled the form, the life, the soul and the queen of all virtues; for all the other virtues are so closely connected with it, that they always accompany it, linked as it were hand in hand together. When it reigns sovereignly in the heart of a Christian, it animates the whole train of the other virtues, sets them in motion, and reduces them to practice; it is never idle, but ever active, operative and laborious; it is always doing good wherever it is, and where it does not good, there it is not, as St. Gregory tells us. It is to the soul of a Christian what wings are to a bird, says St. Augustine; it bears it up against all adversity, and enables it to soar above all sublunary things, and to surmount all difficulties that occur in the practice of virtue; it makes it run with alacrity in the way of the Commandments, and in the road of perfection; it sweetens all the rigours and austerities of penance and mortification, and renders the yoke of

Christ pleasant, and his burden light and easy ; so that every thing he prescribes in the Gospel is performed with pleasure and delight by a true lover of God, let it appear ever so disagreeable to the senses, or repugnant to the inclinations of corrupt nature. Those, indeed, who blindly fix their hearts and affections on the toys and trifling enjoyments of this transitory life, are unacquainted with these heavenly charms of charity ; but give me one, says the great Augustine, who in reality loves the Lord his God as he ought, and he will bear testimony of the truth of what I say. *Da aviantem, et sentit quod dico.* We have almost as many instances and witnesses hereof as there have been saints in the Church of God, the blessed fruits and happy effects of divine Charity having appeared conspicuous in the whole tenor of their conduct. This virtue is so necessary that we cannot expect salvation without it, though we should have the faith of an Abraham, the chastity of a Joseph, the zeal of a Moses, and the piety of a David. Though I should have faith strong enough to remove mountains, says the Apostle, though I should distribute all my worldly substance in alms to feed the poor, though I should even deliver my body to be burnt on the score of religion, yet, if I have not Charity, it would avail me nothing, and I would be no better than a sounding brass or a tinkling symbol. Charity is the nuptial robe with which our souls must be clothed, in order to be entitled to admission to the marriage feast, or to partake of the banquet of eternal glory that is prepared for the elect in the kingdom of Heaven. The very spirit of Christianity consists in Charity ; it is by it, says St. Augustine, that the children of God are discerned from the children of Satan ; it is the plenitude of the Law, as St. Paul calls it ; it is the chief end of the Law, and the very foundation on which the whole Law and the Prophets depend. Our entire duty and obligation, and the substance of whatever God commands and forbids, is reducible to Charity, and briefly contained therein, for which reason the Apostle says, *He that loveth has fulfilled the Law.*

There are two precepts of Charity, which, like two branches, sprout from the same root ; one of them regards God, the other regards our neighbour ; and the tendency of both the one and the other, is to bring back our hearts and affections to God, and make us recover that happy union with him which mankind lost by the fall of Adam. It is of the nature of those two branches of Charity that I intend to speak in the two parts of the following discourse, it being a matter of the greatest consequence for all Christians to be well instructed in so essential a duty. The manner in which we are bound to love the Lord our God, shall be the subject of the first point ; the manner in which we are bound to love our neighbour, shall be the subject of the second point. Let us previously implore the light of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin. *Ave Maria.*

The Law of God, properly speaking, commands nothing but Charity, for this virtue takes in every other duty, and necessarily includes the observance of all the commandments, which made St. Augustine say, *Ama, et fac quod vis. Love God, and do what you please.* Charity does not consist in certain transient consolations and affectionate motions, which sometimes warm the heart with pleasing transports, and are attended with spiritual sweetness and tears of sensible devotion. Persons of a lively imagination, and inclined to tenderness, are apt to have such feeling sentiments without having the reality of love; they sometimes fancy that they love God when in fact, they love him not, and only love themselves. Many of the saints never experienced or felt such sensible impressions, and yet they really loved God above all things, and with their whole heart and soul. To persevere in the service of God, though we should happen to find in it no relish, no consolation, is a more certain proof of a generous, disinterested and solid love. It shews that we love God for his own sake. This holy love covers a multitude of sins in this life, and will be rewarded with everlasting happiness in the next life, when the measure of a Christian's glory will be proportioned to the measure and degree of charity that he is possessed of here on earth. *The measure of loving God is, to love him without measure,* says the devout St. Bernard; for if love should be proportioned to the goodness and excellence of the thing beloved, the love due to God should be immense and infinite, as God himself is immense, and infinitely exalted above all other beings in goodness and in every other perfection; consequently, he deserves to be loved with the most eminent, the most sublime, and the most intense degree of love, were it possible for us to arrive at such perfection in this place of banishment and vale of tears; but it is only in Heaven that the actual perfection of Charity will be acquired, when the curtain shall be drawn, and the cloud shall be removed that hides God from us at present. Divided as we now are, between so many distracting cares and engagements, it is not expected from us, weak and imperfect mortals, that our minds should be constantly united to God by an actual and unrelenting fervour, like unto the blessed Angels and Saints, who see him clearly face to face, and perceive such charms in him that they are forcibly, but sweetly attracted by his incomprehensible beauty, and have it not in their power to restrain their love, or to turn their thoughts from him even for a single moment.

However, though we cannot pretend to such a degree of fervor, we are indispensably bound, as far as our condition and infirmities here below will admit, *to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole mind, and with all our strength.* This is what constitutes the essence of divine Charity; this is the first and the greatest of all the com-

mandments ; and at the same time that it points out our duty to us, it affords us, as St. Augustine and St. John Chrysostom remark, a sad proof of the miserable condition to which sin had reduced the children of Adam, as they stood in need of a formal precept to press and engage them to love the Sovereign Good and the Fountain of all Love. To love him in the manner enjoined by this precept, is to give him effectually the first place in our hearts and in our affections ; it is to love him sovereignly and in preference to every thing in Heaven and on earth ; it is to love him more than ourselves, and better than our own life ; it is to be sincerely disposed to part with what is dearest to us in this world, rather than part with his grace, forfeit his friendship, or offend him by a single mortal sin ; it is to prize, value, and esteem him inwardly in our minds above all things in the universe, and to make him the principal object of our thoughts, the centre of our desires, the beginning and last end of all our pursuits ; it is to employ the faculties of our souls in meditating on his eternal truths, our senses in glorifying him, our tongues in blessing and praising his holy name, our hands, our strength, our labour and industry in serving him, and doing good works to promote his honour and glory.

The love of him neither admits of superior nor of rival ; he claims our whole heart, or will accept of no part of it ; he requires it entirely, without division or reserve ; it is not sufficient to give it to him by halves, as they do who are for serving two masters, God and the world ; God must be the only object of our whole love, and we are not to love any created object with him, finally for itself, but only for him, in him, and with a due subordination to our love for him ; for, as St. Augustine says, L. 10. Conf. C. 29. he who loves any thing with God, which he does not love for God, is deficient in loving God, because, as God is the principle from whence every thing proceeds, so he is likewise the centre in which every thing must terminate. We are to love him for himself, and we are to love nothing out of him, but for his sake and with a view and reference to him. For this reason the aforesaid holy doctor compares the love of God to a great river, which is endowed with the tributary waters of several small rivulets that flow into it. It is thus that all the different species of well regulated love, whether of our neighbour or of ourselves, must, like so many different rivulets, be all united together in the immense ocean of the adorable perfections of God, by which means we may be truly said to love God in all things, and all things in God, and for God, and less than God.

Nothing is more just, nothing is more conformable to the dictates of right reason, nothing can be better adapted to all capacities than this important duty. The poor, as well as the rich ; the ignorant, as well as the learned ; the weak and sickly

as well as the strong and healthy, are capable hereof, and can neither plead any excuse, nor claim the least exemption. Heaven and earth cry out to us on every side, as St. Augustine speaks, that we are are indispensably bound to love him, who is our first beginning and last end. They proclaim his glory and grandeur with a loud voice, and tell us that he is infinitely worthy of all possible love from us and from all creatures. Wherever we turn our eyes, we behold visible traces and striking proofs of his goodness, not only in the order of nature, but also in the order of grace and in the order of glory. From him we have received our very existence, and to his pure bounty we are indebted for all we have and possess. The inestimable benefits of our creation, redemption, sanctification and preservation, are the wonderful effects of his boundless charity; they are so many powerful and endearing motives for loving him with a love of gratitude on account of his goodness to us in this life, and the eternal happiness he has prepared for us in Heaven: but besides loving him with a love of gratitude on this account, and because *he is infinitely good to us*, we are also bound to love him for his own sake, and *because he is infinitely good in himself*. This is the primary and principal motive on which our love for God is to be grounded, as the love that is grounded on this motive is peculiar to the virtue of charity, which is a pure disinterested love of preference, complacency, and benevolence, whereby God is loved on account of the infinite excellency of his own divine nature, and for his own intrinsic goodness, because *he is what he is*, the most perfect, the most excellent, the most beautiful of all beings; in short, because he is God, infinitely good in himself.

The other two theological virtues are founded upon some of his divine perfections in particular. Faith is founded upon his veracity, hope is founded upon his mercy and power, but charity is grounded upon all his attributes, and embraces him as the sovereign good, infinitely lovely in every perfection. Why then, *O ye sons of men*, cries out the Royal Prophet, *why do ye love vanity* and grasp at mere illusions? Why do ye run blindly after empty shadows of felicity? Why do ye set your affections on the fleeting joys and perishable goods of a deceitful, treacherous world? *O come see, and taste how sweet and amiable the Lord your God is, and how good to all those who love him!* He is the only real, solid and substantial good that deserves to be loved, and that can fix the agitation of the heart of man. He is the Source of all goodness, the Fountain of all loveliness, the Centre of all happiness, and an overflowing Ocean of all sweetness, of all charms, of all delights; all that is delightful, charming, good and amiable in the whole creation, flowing from him, as a rivulet flows from its spring, or as the rays of light proceed from the sun. How long, then, O sinners, will you continue to harden your hearts and prostitute your affections on petty toys and trifles? How long will you be so in-

fatuated as to abandon the Fountain of living waters, and wallow in the muddy streams and putrid mire of filthy carnal pleasures? All your real happiness, both in time and eternity, depends on loving the Lord your God above all things. Why, then, do you turn your backs to him, and shamefully give a decided preference to a vile creature, to a worm of the earth, to a lump of clay, and to a handful of dust and ashes? Why do you sacrifice your immortal souls to a sensual gratification, to an imaginary point of honour, to a phantom of vain-glory and human applause, to the love of dress, to the vanity of being admired, to a sordid temporal interest?

The great precept of charity begins first to bind us all to pay an actual tribute of our love to our Creator, as soon, morally speaking, as we attain the use of reason. This is a debt, an homage, and offering we owe him as our Sovereign Lord and Master, our first beginning and last end. All the sacrifices of the first-fruits that were prescribed in the old Law, prove that God requires the first homage of our hearts and the first-fruits of our deliberate actions to be offered to him. We are commanded, Eccles. xiii. *to love him all the days of our life*. The fire that descended from Heaven to consume the sacrifice of Aaron, was an emblem that denoted and inculcated this great duty; for, as by the express orders of God, that sacred fire was to be fed both day and night, and to be preserved constantly burning on the altar of the Tabernacle, so in like manner, charity or the love of God, which is the sacred fire that Jesus Christ brought down with him from Heaven, and which is infused into our souls by the Holy Ghost at the time of our baptism, ought to be constantly kept alive and nourished both day and night on the altar of our hearts, without suffering it to be ever extinguished by mortal sin, or even its fervour to be cooled and weakened by deliberate venial sins. Hence it is that spiritual writers warmly recommend it to all Christians to excite as many devout acts of divine love as they can in the course of their life, particularly every morning and night, and at the hour of death; a fervent act of perfect charity or divine love, being the most holy action that man can perform in this life, and so meritorious in the sight of God, that, with a desire of the sacrament, it is capable of blotting out the most grievous sins in an instant. Let us now proceed to the second point and second branch of charity, or the love of our neighbour.

The love of our neighbour is an extension of the same divine virtue by which we love God, and has so necessary a connection with the love of God, that we cannot fulfil the first precept of charity, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*, without the second, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*; for, as in loving our neighbour for God's sake and upon God's account, we cannot but love God at the same time in the person of our neighbour, so in like manner, if we truly love God, we cannot but love our neighbour, who is created after the image and likeness of God,

redeemed with the precious blood of his beloved Son, and destined to inherit his eternal glory. God's infinite goodness is the motive both of the love of our neighbour and of the love of God, as they are branches of the same virtue of charity; and consequently, to separate one from the other, is to destroy both the one and the other, and to have no divine charity at all; as, to divide the motive of faith, by believing one revealed truth and rejecting another equally revealed by the same divine authority, would be to destroy the virtue of faith, and to have no divine faith at all. Hence St. John says, 1 Ep. c. iv. *If any man shall say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?*

It was a common error among the carnal Jews, who in several points gave a false interpretation to the Law, to confine the love of their neighbour to their friends and relations, to people of their own nation and religious profession, and to exclude all others. Our Blessed Saviour was pleased to correct this mistaken notion, and to teach them, in the beautiful parable of the Samaritan, that charity and brotherly love is not confined or limited, but general and universal, and that it extends itself to all men, whether they be friends or foes, whether they be of the same country and religion, or of a different nation and profession, Matt. c. v. Luke, c. vi. It is true, there is a certain order in charity to be observed in the concurrence of different persons, who are in real necessity and in equal want of assistance; for in this case a preference is due to those with whom we have the greatest ties of justice, and who are nearest allied to us in blood, or *of the same household*, as St. Paul speaks, Galat. c. vi. v. 10. But charity does not stop here; it extends itself, according to its abilities, to all mankind without exception or reserve. Our Divine Redeemer seems to have had nothing more at heart than a due observance of the precept of fraternal love and charity; he began and ended his mission with instructions concerning it; he called it a new commandment and his own favourite Law, John, c. xiii. and xv. and he chose it to be the badge and characteristic that was to distinguish his disciples from the rest of mankind. *It is hereby*, said he, *that all men shall know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.* The Apostles, therefore took care to inculcate the duty of fraternal love above all things, both by word and example; and the primitive Christians lived in such perfect union, peace and harmony, in the infancy of the Church, that one heart seemed to enliven their bodies, and one soul to preside over all their actions, as St. Luke informs us, Acts, iv. The Pagans, who hated their religion, admired their charity; and, as Tertullian relates, were often heard to say with surprise, *See, how the Christians love each other!* Their belief, their doctrine, their gospel, is to love their neighbour and to do good to all men! How little, alas! of this divine virtue is

to be seen now-a-days in the world? Was rancour, animosity and jealousy ever carried to a higher degree than at present? Would one imagine that the Christians of this age are the descendants of the faithful of the primitive Church? Would not one be inclined to believe that the days are already arrived, in which, as Christ our Lord predicted, *the charity of man would grow cold, that iniquity would abound*, and that men would be entangled in wars and quarrels, and live in broils and dissensions, hating, persecuting, destroying and killing one another?

Reason itself dictates that men, who live together in society, should do no wrong or injury to each other, but mutually assist and be serviceable to one another. They should imitate that love and union that subsists between the members of the same natural body, which do not disagree among themselves, but all combine to give mutual assistance, as St. Augustine remarks. These are the duties which humanity has engraved in the bottom of our hearts, and which the all-wise Creator has implanted in our souls. The Christian religion requires still something more noble, more sublime, more elevated and more perfect than what nature inspires: for, as St. Augustine says, *It has perfected nature in regard to charity*, and directs Christians to look upon each other as fellow-members of the same mystical body, whereof Jesus Christ is the head. The model and rule by which it orders us to regulate the love we owe to our neighbour, is the love of ourselves, because, of all loves this is the strongest, the most sincere, the most constant, the most durable and the most extensive. We are commanded to love him, not *for ourselves*, or for our own interest, but *as ourselves*. We are not commanded to love him as one friend loves another, because human friendship is apt to dissolve and dwindle away; nor as one brother loves another, because brotherly love often changes into a mutual hatred; nor as a father loves a son, or a son his father; for we see in the world but too many examples of enmity and rancour, that stifle all the tender sentiments of natural love between parents and their children. The love we are commanded to have for our neighbour must be similar to the love we have for ourselves. This is what is meant by the words, *Love thy neighbour as thyself*; they do not imply an equality of love, but only a resemblance, for Charity well ordained begins with ourselves, and then flows upon all that bear the image of God, and are redeemed with the blood of Jesus Christ. We must, therefore, learn first to love ourselves, as St. Augustine observes, *Serm. 368*; for if we do not know how to love ourselves, how shall we be able to love our neighbour as ourselves? It is to be observed, then, that there are two different kinds of love of ourselves; the one is a vicious criminal love of ourselves and of our bodies, that moves us to gratify our sensuality, curiosity and pride; it is governed by passion, grounded on the depraved inclinations of nature, and makes us only seek and consult

in every thing our own ease, pleasure and interest; like a weight it draws away the heart from the love and allegiance it owes God, to the love of created objects. It is of this blind and inordinate self-love that Christ says in the Gospel, *He that loves his soul shall lose it.* The other kind of love of ourselves is, a just and holy love of ourselves and of our souls, which is directed by reason and religion, and which makes us hate sin, subdue our passions, mortify the flesh and deny our own will, whatever pleasure it craves contrary to the will of God. To love ourselves with any other love than this is, in reality, to hate ourselves, because it is the way to render ourselves objects of God's hatred, liable to eternal punishment hereafter. This made St. Augustine say, Ep. 176, *No man can be truly said to love himself, unless he loves and serves God.* It is of this holy and spiritual kind of love that the Gospel speaks, when it assigns the love of ourselves for the standard and the model we must follow in loving our neighbour; we are to wish and desire unto him all the real happiness and good that we wish and desire unto ourselves, according to reason and the law of God; we are chiefly to wish him such good things as regard his future happiness and eternal salvation. In short, *we are to do by him as we would be done by*, Luke, c. vi. v. 31. for, according to the remark of St. Gregory, the divine precept of charity comprehends these two great principles of the law of nature: Not to do to another what with reason and in justice we would not have done to ourselves; but on the contrary, to do unto him what in the order of wisdom and justice we would have done to ourselves were we in his situation.

These are principles which no one contradicts. The Mahometan, the Jew and the Gentile agree herein with the Christian. However, there is a wide difference between the love which the Gospel commands, and the natural love, human affection and friendship, which as our Blessed Saviour tells us, Matt. c. v. subsists amongst the Heathens who are void of divine charity. A love that is influenced by flesh and blood, and grounded only on human respect and principles purely natural, is not sufficient for the disciples of Christ. His favourite precept is not fulfilled by any of those different kinds of love, which take their birth from selfish, mercenary views, and look no farther than at the private interest, profit, pleasure and conveniency that may accrue from a neighbour. No, my brethren, we must raise our thoughts higher, if we have a mind to arrive at the holy love of charity, which is a pure, spiritual and disinterested love of sincere amity and benevolence. God himself is the motive of it; it always regards him in the good it wishes and does to others; it studies only to please him, and seeks no other reward. It is not a mere barren speculative love, that sits only on the tongue, and consists in empty compliments, vain offers of service, idle protestations of friendship, or verbal assurances that we wish our neighbour no harm and bear him no ill-will.

- * No, Christians, the love that God commands is an active, practical love, that lodges in the heart, and manifests itself by its effects; it inclines the soul wherein it dwells to perform offices of charity, and practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; it dries up the tears of the widow and the orphan, and relieves those who are a prey to hunger and wretchedness; it clothes the naked, visits and comforts the sick and suffering poor in cellars and garrets, and beholds them with tenderness and compassion, considering in them the person of Jesus Christ, who looks upon whatever is done to any of his little ones for his sake, as done to himself in person. In fine, the love of our neighbour is best known by what is done for him in his spiritual and temporal necessities, as the love of God is best known by a faithful compliance with our respective duties, and a regular observance of his commandments, according to these words of our Blessed Saviour, *He that keeps my commandments, he it is that loves me*. This is the best sign and the surest test of our charity; this is a more satisfactory proof that we really love God and our neighbour, than any vain parade of exterior professions and verbal declarations can be; for it is a manifest contradiction to say that we love God and our neighbour, if our works and actions speak a different language, and give the lie to our words. Let us then examine ourselves by this evangelical test; let us according to the advice of St. Augustine, sound all the secret recesses, and probe the bottom of our hearts, that we may find out the ruling principle of our actions, and discover what it is that chiefly influences and regulates all the interior motions of our souls; whether it be a true love for God, or a blind inordinate self-love which is diametrically opposite to, and subversive of the holy love of charity. How many, alas! are there in the very midst of Christianity, who, on looking narrowly into the state of their conscience, will find that the profane fire of concupiscence is burning on the altar of their hearts, and that the sacred fire of divine love has been totally extinguished in their souls for a long series of years, by one or more mortal sins? How many will discover on close inspection, that they are slaves to some favourite vice, and place their last end in the object of some disorderly passion? Yet they fancy they love God, and even say that they really do; for, as Augustine observes, this is the common language of sinners, as well as of the just; of the lukewarm, as well as of the fervent; of the inhabitants of Babylon, as well as of the citizens of Jerusalem. But their conduct proves, that in fact they only love and idolize themselves, as they have no other object in view, and refer every thing ultimately to themselves without any reference to God. If they dread sin, it is not because it offends God, but because God punishes it; if they fear hell, it is not on account of the pain of loss, or the eternal privation of God, but on account of the pain of sense. The eternal flames of hell are the principal evil that alarms and terrifies

them. In short, their souls are void of divine love, and only full of the deadly poison of self-love, which is an enemy to the virtue of charity, and one of the greatest obstacles to a Christian's progress in divine love; for in proportion as it is indulged and cherished in the heart, it obstructs the effusions of grace and the operations of the Holy Ghost. On the contrary, in proportion as self-love is restrained and weakened by the opposite virtue of self-denial, the pure love of God will triumph and reign sovereignly in the heart and inflame it with chaste affections. O God of Love, O Spirit of Charity, replenish our souls with this heavenly virtue. O Sun of Justice, make the light of thy mercy shine upon us, and vouchsafe to dart a bright ray of thy grace into our hearts, that, as the sacred fire of the old Law was re-kindled in the days of Nehemiah, so in like manner the spiritual fire of charity may be re-kindled and lit up in our souls by a speedy and sincere repentance. O may we even now begin to love thee with our whole heart and soul, and pay off the long arrears of love we owe thy infinite goodness. May we never cease loving and serving thee here on earth, till we have the happiness to see and enjoy thee in Heaven, where charity reigns in her full lustre, and is the joy and glory of the blessed. This is the happiness that I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Enormity and Dismal Effects of Mortal Sin.

Jesu, Præceptor, miserere nostri.—S. Luc. c. xvii. v. 13.

Jesus, our Master, have pity on us.—St. Luke, c. xvii. v. 13.

THE Gospel of this day informs us, that ten poor men, covered with a leprosy, recurred to Jesus Christ for relief in their distress. The feeling sense they had of their misery made them solicitous to procure a remedy for their corporal infirmities. They were forbidden by the Law of Moses to enter into the cities and towns of Judæa, for fear of spreading the infection, and communicating it to the inhabitants; wherefore they resolved to watch on the high roads for a favourable opportunity of addressing themselves to our Blessed Saviour, and imploring his divine assistance. It happened, on a certain day, that he was passing through the midst of Samaria, on his way to the city of Jerusalem, in order to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. The poor lepers having met him on the road, to their

inexpressible joy, and seeing him ready to enter into a neighbouring castle, they stood at a distance, and raising their voices together, they cried out unanimously, *Jesus our Master have pity on us.* This short and humble prayer was so prevalent, that our charitable Redeemer was thereby moved to relieve them. No sooner had their unanimous petition reached his ears but it touched his tender heart, and made him look upon them with the eyes of compassion. See, my brethren, how ready the Father of Mercies is to hear the prayers of the humble, and to grant them their request! However, he did not cure those poor lepers on the spot, nor restore them to their perfect health in an instant, as on other occasions he was accustomed to do; but he was pleased to command them to go first and *shew themselves to the Priests.* Why so? It was, as the holy Fathers remark, to inculcate the necessity of Sacramental Confession in the new Law, and to give us to understand, that it is by the ministry of the Priests that God is pleased to remit and forgive sins. It was to teach us that sinners, who in a mystical sense may be called lepers, must, by a sincere and candid confession of all their sins, humbly lay open the state of their consciences to their spiritual Guides and Physicians, in order to have their souls cleansed and purified from the spiritual leprosy of mortal sin. The Gospel informs us also, that only one of the ten lepers who were healed, returned back to thank his bountiful Benefactor for having cured him from his corporal leprosy. This poor man was a Samaritan, the other nine were Jews, and of the number of God's chosen people. The signal favour conferred on them all, called upon them all for a grateful acknowledgment, yet the Samaritan alone had the gratitude to come back and give glory to God after being cleansed. Wherefore our Saviour expressed his displeasure thereat in the following words, *Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? There is no one found to give glory to God but this one stranger.* His conduct herein was so pleasing to Jesus, that he granted him more than what he had first requested. He had only requested a cure for his body, and Jesus healed the disorders both of his soul and body; for he enlightened him inwardly with the light of faith, and he cleansed him from the leprosy of sin, saying to him at the same time, *Arise and go, thy faith has made thee sound.* This plainly shews, that to praise and glorify God for all the benefits we receive, is an indispensable duty, and a just tribute we owe the Divine Majesty for all his blessings, whether spiritual or temporal. Yet how many are there who repay the favours of Heaven with the blackest ingratitude? How few who retain a grateful remembrance of God's infinite goodness, and make him a proper return for his boundless mercy? Were it not for this great mercy, Christians, you would have been justly condemned to the eternal flames of hell, the very instant you had the misfortune to fall into mortal sin after your

Baptism. What thanks should you not return to the Lord, your God, for his patience in having spared you hitherto, and in still giving you time to repent and recover his grace, whilst thousands have been cut off the face of the earth by a sudden and unprovided death; and are now actually burning in unquenchable flames for fewer sins than, perhaps, you have committed? Are you not, then, more indebted to the mercy of God for having thus preserved you from falling into hell, than if he had really delivered your souls out of it? What return do you make him for his goodness to you? Do you not resemble the ungrateful lepers? Nay, you are more insensible of your sad and deplorable condition; O sinner, when you do not recur, like them, to Jesus Christ for a remedy to heal and cleanse your soul, covered all over with the leprosy of mortal sin, which is the most dangerous of all leprosies, and the most dreadful evil that can befall a Christian in this world, as I will endeavour to shew you in the following discourse. The nature and enormity of mortal sin, and its dismal effects and consequences; shall be the entire subject of your favourable attention. Let us previously invoke the divine assistance, through the intercession of the immaculate Virgin, whom the Archangel Gabriel greeted with these words, *Ave Maria*.

Sin, in general, is a voluntary offence, or a wilful transgression of God's Law, by thought, word, deed or omission. Some sins are compared in the Scripture to a *camel*, others are compared to a *gnat*; or small insect; some are compared to a *beam*, others to a *mote* in the eye; some are compared to *wood*, others to *straw* and *stubble*, which are easily consumed. Some, it says, *the just man falls into seven times*; others it declares to be *odious* and *abominable* in the sight of God, and to *exclude for ever from the inheritance of his heavenly kingdom*. Hence comes the distinction between mortal and venial sin. Mortal sin is so called, because it kills the soul of the sinner, by depriving it of the life of grace, and making it liable to eternal death or damnation; which is the worst of all deaths. Venial sin is a light offence, or a small breach of the Law of God, and it is so called, because it is more easily pardoned. Every sin, be it ever so small, is a great evil in itself, and ought to be carefully avoided, inasmuch as it offends God, though but lightly when compared to mortal sin. But the most pernicious and the most dangerous kind of venial sins, are those which are committed deliberately; out of an evil custom, attachment or affection; for a contempt of them cools the fervour of charity, and leads the sinner on gradually, step by step, towards the total loss of sanctifying grace, and the frightful gulph of mortal sin. The greatest things take their rise from small beginnings. A slight distemper, disregarded in the beginning, often brings on great diseases and death. A small spark neglected, frequently kindles a great fire; and drops of water gradually multiplied, will at length sink the largest ships by their number; and if a

ship be lost, says St. Augustine, Ep. 118. what matter is it whether she be swallowed up in the sea all at once, or be gradually sunk by many drops of water entering at a leak and neglected to be pumped out? A little motion of anger indulged, led Cain, by degrees, to the horrid crime of murdering his brother; an unguarded glance of the eye, not minded, dragged on King David to the heinous sins of adultery and murder; and an inordinate attachment to money, not corrected in time, brought unhappy Judas to betray his Lord and Master.

If venial sin is, therefore, to be carefully shunned as a great and pernicious evil, it follows, of course, that mortal sin, which is the sovereign evil, as God is the sovereign good, should be shunned and detested above all things, as God ought to be sought and to be loved above all things. Mortal sin is of all things the most base, the most vile, the most odious, the most ruinous, the most detrimental, and the most abominable; it is an abomination in its own nature, and a desolation in its effects; nothing more offensive or more injurious to God; nothing more destructive or pernicious to the sinner; its malice, its enormity, and its dismal consequences, are such as render it the greatest of all evils, and the most deserving of all our hatred and abhorrence. Nay, there appears something so excessively monstrous and foul in every circumstance of mortal sin, that neither thoughts can distinctly represent, nor words sufficiently express. It is evident that the grievousness of an injury always rises in proportion to the superior dignity of the person offended above the person that injures him, and therefore, to comprehend the greatness of the injury, we must not only consider what the offence itself is, but likewise who it is that is offended, and who it is that offends. We are to consider, first, if the person offended be highly exalted in dignity and merit; secondly, if the offender be very low, mean and contemptible; and thirdly, if the offence be of its own nature very provoking. The affront that a person distinguished by the most sublime rank, and recommendable by the most eminent qualities, would receive from a man of nothing, for example, if he was trampled upon and treated with sovereign contempt by a common slave, or by one of his own menial servants, it would be judged a very horrid and enormous offence, because the disproportion and inequality between him who would give that insult, and him to whom it would be given, together with the indignity of an act so contemptuous in itself, would afford some just idea of the enormity of the outrage committed. It is from this clear principle generally acknowledged, that we may judge of the atrociousness of the injury done to God by mortal sin, because all the three aforesaid circumstances which are capable of aggravating an offence, meet here together in the highest degree; for it is God himself, whose dignity is infinite, and whose grandeur is supreme, that is insulted and attacked, and that by a vile miserable creature, by a mere handful of dust and ashes,

and by a most grievous offence. Mortal sin strikes directly at his infinite goodness, abuses his infinite mercy, defies his infinite justice, and provokes his vengeance; malice, insolence, treachery, rebellion, perfidiousness, ingratitude, and a barefaced contempt of his Divine Majesty, are its inseparable attendants and properties. By mortal sin, a poor reptile of the earth impudently raises his head against Heaven, daringly wages war against the King of all Glory, audaciously flies in the face of his Creator, insolently attacks the Supreme Being, presumptuously affronts his Lord and his God, and impiously tramples upon his most sacred Law. By mortal sin a Christian perfidiously violates the covenant made at his baptism, sacrilegiously breaks the most solemn vows, treacherously dissolves the most sacred ties of fidelity, and basely strikes a league with hell, and subjects himself to Satan; by mortal sin, he repays the goodness of his heavenly Father and most bountiful Benefactor with the blackest ingratitude, and in return for the many signal benefits, favours, graces and blessings conferred on him in preference to thousands of others, he renews the passion and death of Jesus Christ, crucifies him over again, and treads under his feet the precious blood of the Son of God, as St. Paul expresses it: In fine, mortal sin implies a barefaced contempt of the living God, as it is a blind preference of some created object or criminal pleasure, before the eternal and Sovereign Good, that is infinitely grand, infinitely beautiful, infinitely amiable. By every mortal sin that the sinner is guilty of, he turns his back to his best friend, he forsakes his merciful Redeemer, he parts with his heavenly Father, to feed, like the prodigal son, on the husks of swine; he abandons his Creator for the sake of the creature; he quits the fountain of living water to plunge in a muddy cistern, as the Scripture speaks; he barters Heaven for earth, and more perverse than the Jews, who preferred Barabbas to Jesus, he gives the devil himself the preference before Jesus, as Tertullian remarks. Nay, as St. Augustine says, by every mortal sin that he commits, he sells his soul to the devil, and for his salary and recompence he receives nothing but a momentary satisfaction, a brutal pleasure, a filthy delight, a sordid, perishable interest. These are the idols and false Gods which the unhappy sinner erects on the altar of his heart, and adores and worships there, to the great contempt and injury of the living God. This is what made the Lord complain, through the mouth of the Prophet Isaias, c. i. and say, *I have reared up children, but they have undervalued and despised me; I have left nothing undone to purchase their affections and gain their hearts, but they have dishonoured me; they have forsaken and abandoned me; they have chosen to forfeit my grace and friendship, rather than quit their favourite sins and renounce their evil ways.* Are you then surprised, my brethren, that the Lord, being thus despised, insulted and outraged by the crying malice of mortal

sin, has from time to time manifested his indignation and hatred to it, by inflicting the most severe punishments on the unhappy offenders even in this life. The universal deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by showers of fire and sulphur from the Heavens, with many other visible judgments recorded in Holy Writ, are, indeed, melancholy instances thereof; but nothing demonstrates the horrid outrage and injury committed against the infinite majesty of God by mortal sin, nothing shows the great hatred he bears unto it more clearly, than the passion and death of the world's Redeemer. Hence we see that one mortal sin of disobedience was so odious, so offensive, so injurious, and so provoking to the Almighty, that the gates of Heaven were thereby shut against mankind, and that nothing less than the humiliation of a person of infinite dignity was required to make condign satisfaction for it; nothing less than the precious blood of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, was able to cancel it, or to atone for it in the rigour of justice. It is from the bitterness of the remedy, says St. Bernard, that we may form some idea of the baseness and enormity of mortal sin, and truly judge how horrid and abominable it must be in the eyes of God. And really, were it not infinitely horrid, odious and detestable to the last degree, it would not oblige the great God, who is so prone to mercy, and whose very nature is goodness, to condemn to unquenchable flames a soul, made after his own image and likeness, created to enjoy himself for ever, and ransomed with the precious blood of his beloved Son.

Such, notwithstanding, is the punishment reserved in the next life for the soul which departs this life in the state of a single mortal sin unrepented; for, as the Scripture assures us, the wages and salary of sin is death, the death of the soul here, and a second death or eternal damnation hereafter; hence the Prophet Ezekiel, says, c. xviii. v. 20. *The soul that sins shall die.* Though incorruptible in her nature, and immortal in her own substance, she dies in the presence of God, and becomes more loathsome and offensive than a putrified carcase, from the very instant that she loses God and his grace by mortal sin; for, as it is the soul of man that gives life to the body, so it is the grace of God that gives life to the soul, and consequently, as the body dies when the soul departs out of it, so, in like manner, the soul dies as soon as it is deprived by mortal sin of the supernatural life of sanctifying grace. This made St. Augustine say, that a sinner in the state of mortal sin carries a corpse within himself wherever he goes, inasmuch as he carries a dead soul in a living body, buried therein as in a grave, and exposed every instant to the danger of being buried in hell. O that I was able, cries out this holy doctor, to raise such unfortunate sinners to the happy life of God's grace, and to make them as solicitous for the preservation of the supernatural life of their souls, as they

generally are for the preservation and recovery of the transitory life of their perishable bodies! But, alas, every one dreads the death of his body; few dread the death of their souls. Mortal man labours incessantly to slave off his corporal death, though he knows it to be unavoidable, and in the interim he takes little or no pains to fly from mortal sin, though it is the greatest and most dreadful misfortune that can ever happen to a Christian in this world.

To be more fully convinced hereof, we need but consider that whilst a Christian is in the happy state of grace, his soul is a favourite of Heaven, an object of God's complacency, and a living temple and sanctuary of the Holy Ghost; it is embellished with his heavenly gifts and blessings, enriched with virtues and merits, enlivened with faith, animated with hope, inflamed with divine love, and resembles Jesus Christ by the happy union it has with him, as iron, when it is penetrated and inflamed with fire, resembles the fire itself, and glows and shines with its heat and brightness. But no sooner is mortal sin committed, but the soul is rendered a sink of filth and corruption, and a receptacle of Satan; she immediately loses all her former beauty and splendour, fervour and lustre; she is stripped of all her rich and valuable ornaments; she is robbed of all her spiritual treasures; she is disfigured, profaned and polluted; she is reduced to a state of poverty and nakedness, and brought to the lowest ebb of misery and wretchedness; all her accumulated merits are instantly swept away, much after the same manner that a plentiful harvest is at once swept away by a sudden inundation; for as the Prophet Ezekiel says, c. xxviii. *If the just man withdraws himself from his justice, the virtues he has practised shall be no more remembered.* By falling into mortal sin he becomes God's enemy, a slave of Satan, a confederate of hell, a child of perdition; in fine he loses God and his grace, the merits of his past good works, and the glory of Heaven for ever and ever, if he happens to die in that unhappy state; for it is an article of faith, no less certain than terrifying, that God in his justice has decreed an eternity of torments in hell for every mortal sin that is not washed off the soul by a true and sincere repentance in this world. The unfortunate sinner, therefore, who departs this life in the state of mortal sin unrepented, may bid an everlasting farewell to the kingdom of Heaven, into which, nothing that is defiled can enter; he may bid an eternal adieu to the beatific vision of the ever blessed Trinity; hell is to be the place of his abode for ever and for ever; infernal spirits are to be his perpetual companions; incomprehensible torments are to be his everlasting inheritance; to burn with merciless devils in unquenchable flames of fire is to be his portion for a never-ending eternity. Such, my dearest brethren, are the dismal consequences of mortal sin, which

clearly prove how offensive and injurious it must be to God, and how detrimental and destructive to the sinner himself.

Should we not conclude, then, that it is our own great interest, as well as our indispensable duty, to fly from it as from the face of a venomous serpent? Should we not resolve from this instant, rather to suffer the most cruel death than ever to be guilty of mortal sin, either in thought, word, or deed? Should not those who have had the misfortune at any time in their past life to fall into that deplorable state, be always humble in their own eyes, and incessantly use their best endeavours to regain the love and friendship of their injured Creator, and recover the valuable treasure of his sanctifying grace, by a true and sincere repentance? In the primitive ages of Christianity, one mortal sin was deemed sufficient to make a sinner do penance all the days of his life, and for this reason, the canons of the Church formerly enjoined on penitents a rigorous fast on bread and water for the space of seven, ten, nay, fourteen or fifteen years, for the expiation of a single mortal sin. O what deep impressions should not the consideration of these great truths make on the hearts and minds of these sinners, who make so little account of committing sin, that, according to the Scripture phrase, *they drink iniquity like water*, and continue whole years together in the state of as many mortal sins, perhaps, as they have hairs on their heads, though they know not but the first time they close their eyes to sleep, they may never unclosé them but to view the flames of hell, nor return to their senses but to feel unspeakable torments? Is it not stupendous that Christians can sleep thus unconcerned in the arms of perdition, surrounded by as many dangers as they have committed sins, and pursued by as many executioners of God's justice as there are devils in hell, who only expect the final sentence of the Sovereign Judge to arrest and torment their souls for ever? St. Thomas of Acquin says, he cannot comprehend how a Christian can be at rest, or even laugh and divert himself, whilst his conscience tells him he is in the state of mortal sin, since the sword of God's avenging justice is in the interim continually hanging over his criminal head, and threatening every instant to strike the fatal blow, and cut the slender thread of life by which he is suspended over the mouth of hell. The dreadful catastrophe of numberless sinners, who are every day surprized and cut off the face of the earth in the midst of their iniquities, the menaces of Heaven, the fear of God's justice, the uncertainty of the hour of death, the many obstacles and difficulties that attend a death-bed conversion, the dreadful judgment that ensues, and the never-ending eternity that depends on the issue of it, are more than sufficient to deter us all from living a single hour in the state and affection of mortal sin. We should seek God, by a speedy and sincere repentance, the very time we have the misfortune to lose him.

by sin, without suffering a moment to intervene between our rise and our fall. We should endeavour to make our peace with our injured Creator, and have immediate recourse to his mercy, as soon as we offend his goodness, since otherwise his justice may overtake us when we least expect it, and strike our names out of the book of life for ever.

There is not, there cannot be a more dangerous illusion, my brethren, than to procrastinate your conversion upon a project of repenting in the end of your life. No time is more unfit or improper to begin so arduous a task. Many impediments may occur then, that may prevent the very possibility of repenting, or even of bestowing one serious reflection on the eternal salvation of your souls. A malignant fever, or some other violent disorder may, perhaps, derange your reason, and render you incapable of partaking of the favourable supports of religion, or reaping any benefit from the holy Sacraments of the Church. The only time you can depend on, the only favourable time for you to set about this important work, is the present time, whilst you are in health, in your perfect senses, and capable of making some regular preparation, and complying with all the duties of a Christian penitent. Let no one be deceived with false hopes, or flatter himself with the notion that it is never too late to repent; for though a true repentance never comes too late, yet, as St. Augustine says, a late repentance is seldom true and sincere; for men generally die as they live; their death is commonly of a piece with their life. Such as the tree is, such also is the fruit. Such as the grain is that is sown in the earth, such likewise is the crop. A man who dies, is compared in holy Writ to a tree that falls. The tree, as St. Bernard observes, commonly falls on that side which has the greatest quantity of branches, as it inclines mostly towards that side. In like manner sinners commonly fall whatever way they mostly incline. If they follow the natural bent of their evil inclinations without controul or restraint, and habituate themselves to drunkenness, impurity, cursing, swearing and blaspheming, in all probability they will fall on that side, and die as they live, drunkards, lechers, cursers, swearers and blasphemers. The evil habits to which they are attached, and the favourite vices to which they are addicted, and which they take little or no pains to conquer, will, it is to be feared, follow them to the grave, and accompany their souls to the bar of Divine Justice, there to rise up in judgment against them and plead their condemnation. O may God, in his infinite mercy, preserve every one in this congregation from an experimental knowledge of the like misfortune. For this end, my brethren, let me conjure you by the bowels of Jesus Christ, never to live in a state in which you would be afraid to die. Let the just, who are in the happy state of grace, guard most carefully against every thing that might occasion them to fall.

Let those who, on looking into their consciences, find that they are involved in the state of mortal sin, be alarmed at their deplorable situation, and resolve from this instant not to harbour that foul monster and poisonous viper any longer within their breasts. Let them throw themselves, without further delay, at the feet of God's mercy, with contrite and humbled hearts, before the gate of mercy is shut in their faces. We prostrate ourselves before thee, O Father of mercies and God of all consolation. We most humbly beseech thee to grant the great gift of final perseverance to those who are already in the state of grace, that nothing either in life or death may ever separate them from the love of thee, or engage them to depart from the ways of justice and forfeit their innocence. Vouchsafe to open the eyes of such as unhappily labour under the guilt of mortal sin, that becoming sensible of their miserable situation, they may conceive an ardent desire of being freed from their bondage, and restored to the sweet liberty of thy children. O may we all begin from this hour to devote the remainder of our days to thy service, till we have the happiness to see and enjoy thee in the sacred mansions of eternal bliss. Which I wish you, my brethren, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

FIFTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

On the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes. —Luc. c. i. v. 48.

Henceforth all nations shall call me blessed. —Luke, c. i. v. 48.

ON this great festival the Church commemorates the happy departure of the blessed Virgin Mary out of this world, and the day of her translation into the kingdom of Heaven, as being the birth-day of her true greatness and glory, the consummation of all the sublime mysteries by which her life was rendered so wonderful, and the crowning of all the eminent virtues which we admire in particular on her other festivals. This mystery is promiscuously called the *Passage*, *Dormition*, and *Assumption* of the mother of God; but whether the assumption was of her soul only, or of her soul and body both together, is not a defined article of faith, nor is it proposed to us to be believed as such. It is, indeed, a very ancient tradition and a pious belief, that soon after her death her body was re-united to her blessed soul, and assumed or taken up into Heaven by a singular privilege before the general resurrection, which is to take place at

the end of the world; for if the Almighty dispensed with Henoeh and Elias in the general sentence of death at the usual time; and if, on the day of Christ's resurrection *he raised to life the bodies of several saints*, who made part of his triumphant ascension, when, as St. Paul says, *he led captivity captive*, why may it not be allowed, and piously believed, that the blessed mother of God might be likewise exempted from the common decree, and dispensed with to anticipate the time of the general resurrection of the dead at the day of judgment, especially, since this privilege is not so particular, nor so extraordinary as other privileges and favours bestowed upon her? Not only the bodies, but even the garments of the three Hebrew children, were preserved from being burnt by the flames in the fiery furnace of Babylon. Was it not then becoming, that the immaculate body of the mother of the world's Redeemer should be preserved from being corrupted in the grave, and becoming a prey to devouring worms like the bodies of other mortals? St. Augustine tells us, that he could not entertain an idea of the corruption of the body of the mother of God, and that it would be shocking to express it. *Sentire non valeo, dicere perhorresco*. Several other holy Doctors of the Latin and Greek Church are of the same opinion, and do not hesitate to assert, that a preservation from the corruption of death, and a speedy assumption to glory, was due to that sacred body of which the Son of God took human flesh.

However, the object of the present festival is still the same, whether this favour was conferred on her or not; for, as we honour the departure of the other saints out of this world, so we have reason to honour the departure of the blessed Virgin, and to pour forth our souls before the Lord in holy transports of joy, praise and thanksgiving for the super-eminent degree of grace and glory to which his infinite mercy has exalted her. To inspire you with the like sentiments, and to excite your devotion to her, I will endeavour to shew you how solid this devotion is in its principles, how salutary in its effects, how acceptable to God and beneficial to mankind, when it is performed according to the spirit of the Church. In the first part you shall see on what this devotion is grounded, and in the second in what it consists. Let us previously implore the light and unction of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of this spotless Virgin, greeting her for this purpose with the angelical salutation, *Ave Maria*.

The devotion which the Catholic Church pays to the blessed Virgin, is so well grounded both upon reason and religion, that it is amazing how it can be opposed by any who make profession of Christianity; for reason as well as religion teaches us, that the friends of God, who have a near and close relation to him, or who have been elevated by his grace to an eminent degree of perfection, sanctity and glory, should be honoured for his sake, and respected on his account. *Let honour be given*, says St. Paul, *to whom honour is due*, Rom. c. xiii. v. 7. The Mount

whereon Moses stood, and the Decalogue was published, the sacred Vessels, the Temples, the Churches, the Communion Table, the Books of the Holy Scripture, and the like inanimate things which are consecrated to the divine service, ought to be respected and revered on God's account, and for the reference they have to him. St. John the Baptist professed his respect for the latchet of our Saviour's shoes, and the sick woman in the Gospel revered the hem of his garment, and was miraculously cured by touching it with respect. What honour, what respect and veneration, should we not pay then unto that animated Temple of the Holy Ghost, that precious vessel of election, that most distinguished favourite of Heaven and spotless Virgin, who, in preference to all other creatures, was singled out and elevated to the high dignity and eminent rank of Mother of God? Must we not be deaf to the voice of nature, must we not be prejudiced in the extreme, destitute of true piety, void of gratitude and of the love of Jesus Christ himself, if we do not highly honour and respect the mother that bore him, and furnished him with the blood that redeemed us all from the bondage of sin? Does not the dishonour and disrespect that is shewn to the mother, reflect indirectly on the son? The Lord himself honours his friends exceedingly, as the Royal Prophet observes, Ps. cxxxviii. v. 16. The three divine Persons of the most adorable Trinity, have vouchsafed to honour the blessed Virgin Mary in a manner that no pure creature was honoured ever since or before. God the Father honoured her in a most singular manner when he destined, elected, and prepared her for becoming the mother of his only Son Jesus; God the Son honoured her highly when he descended from Heaven, made choice of her for his favourite sanctuary, tabernacle and dwelling-place, and was pleased to be born of her in the plenitude of time. God the Holy Ghost honoured her also, when the Lord of all glory was miraculously conceived in her and clothed with human flesh, by the divine and supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost. The Church of God, therefore, being thus authorized by God's own example, and guided by his unerring Spirit, has always held the blessed Virgin in very high veneration, and has in all nations and in all ages since the first establishment of Christianity, justly paid her a religious honour and respect; inferior indeed, by many degrees, to the supreme honour and worship of *Latria*, which is paid to God alone; but superior to the honour that is given to all the Princes of the earth, and to all the Angels and Saints in Heaven. Hence it is that so many solemn festivals have been devoted to her in the course of the year, so many cathedral churches and chapels throughout Christendom have been dedicated to God under her patronage, so many altars have been erected, so many religious orders and confraternities have been instituted under the invocation of her name, and so many holy doctors and learned writers of venerable

antiquity have, as it were in concert, employed both their tongues and their pens in proclaiming her praises, and in recommending to posterity a true devotion to her, as being not only well-grounded and lawful in its own nature, but also as redounding very much to the honour and glory of God, and to the spiritual advantage of the faithful. This extraordinary respect and universal devotion of all ages and nations, has been foretold by the blessed Virgin herself, about eighteen hundred years ago, in that celebrated canticle, *Magnificat*, which she pronounced by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, Luke, c. i. and in which she expressly prophesied, *that all succeeding generations should call her blessed, because he who is mighty had done great things for her.*

That she should be elevated to the dignity of being the Mother of God, was a most stupendous miracle, and the highest honour, the most transcendent rank to which any pure creature was ever raised. Neither Patriarchs nor Prophets, nor Apostles nor Martyrs, nor Angels nor Archangels, nor Cherubim nor Seraphim, nor any of the choirs of blessed Spirits who assist continually before the Throne of God, ever approached so near, or were so closely united and allied to, the Sovereign Majesty of God; nay, no pure creature was capable of being elevated to a higher rank, or of bearing a more illustrious title of honour than that of the Mother of God, the Mother of Jesus, our Divine Redeemer. This special favour, this singular prerogative, this supereminent dignity, and of course every thing that was suitable to it, was reserved for Mary, and for Mary alone, who, preferably to all other creatures, whether visible or invisible, in Heaven or on earth, was chosen to bring forth the Author of life, to give a Saviour to the world, a Victim of reconciliation to sinners, a Model to the just, and a new nature to the Son of God. It was by her we received Jesus, and with Jesus every thing that is good; it was in her, and of her that his adorable body was framed; he took flesh of her flesh, and the precious blood which he offered upon the altar of the cross to his eternal Father for our ransom, was formed of her substance; so that we may say, that all the blessings of the old and new Testament were concentrated in her, and that mankind is, in some measure, indebted to her for their salvation; since, as St. Augustine remarks, next after her beloved Son Jesus, she has been the principal co-operatrix of human redemption, and the worthiest instrument in the hand of God for crushing the head of the infernal serpent, and for removing the malediction that was laid on us all in punishment of our transgressions.

However, though the quality and prerogative of the mother of Jesus, true God and true man, raised her to so eminent and so exalted a degree of honour, yet it must be acknowledged, according to the holy Fathers, that Mary was happier

for her virtues than for her privileges, happier for her sanctity than for her dignity, happier in loving the Lord her God than in having conceived and brought him forth. God's own honour was interested herein, and required that so close and so near a relation should be embellished with the most exquisite gifts of grace which became her high rank, and Mary's fidelity in corresponding with these graces was the measure of her glory, and rendered her so distinguished a favourite of Heaven, so deserving an object of God's complacency. It was it that qualified her for supporting the glorious title of Mother of God, and exalted her more in his eyes than all the crowns and sceptres of the world could have done. It was her ardent charity, her angelical purity, her conformity to the divine will in the sharpest trials, her meekness, her patience, and her other transcendent virtues, that the Lord considered and chiefly regarded in the recompence he bestowed upon her, as appears from what Christ himself says, Luke, c. xi. v. 28. and Mat. c. xii. v. 50.

Her reason was never obscured by any passion, for being always perfectly subject to God, her will was likewise perfectly subject to her reason. No sooner did she know her Creator by the light of faith, but she broke forth into acts of divine love, adoration, praise and thanksgiving. Her heart took fire in an instant, because God's grace found no resistance in it; and as God's grace increased in her soul without intermission, because she never ceased to co-operate with it, so her love for God, and all the other exalted virtues and perfections that adorned her soul, received proportionably their gradual improvement, and went on increasing in her during the whole course of her life. Hence the Archangel Gabriel, sent from the Court of Heaven on an embassy to her, saluted her, not by her own name, but with the most glorious title of *full of grace*, as if it were her proper name, assuring her at the same time that she had found favour before God in preference to all of her sex. Her modesty was such that she even trembled at the sight of the Archangel, announcing to her, in a human form, the happy tidings of man's approaching redemption. It was not from the distraction of diversions and worldly amusements that he called her aside to deliver his message; he found her shut up in her oratory, retired from the dangerous occasions of sin, and wholly occupied in the contemplation of heavenly things. The ground-work and foundation of these and all her other virtues, was her sincere and most profound humility. This was her darling virtue, and it was it that distinguished her, made her so acceptable in the sight of God, and attracted the Son of God from the seat of his glory into her virginal womb. It is therefore to this virtue alone that she attributes all the signal favours, graces and blessings that were bestowed upon her, as appears from the following words of her Canticle: *Because the Lord hath regarded the humility of his handmaid, behold henceforth all generations shall call me*

blessed. St. Elizabeth, mother of St. John the Baptist, inspired by the Holy Ghost, called her *blessed among women*, as being the *Mother of the Lord*; and she was exalted to this high honour and dignity in preference to all others, because of all others she was the most humble. This was the source of all the precious ornaments of divine grace, and of the rich treasures of supernatural virtues, that Heaven poured forth into her happy soul with a boundless liberality; nay, her assumption into the kingdom of Heaven was properly the crown, the recompence, and the triumph of her humility.

Human weakness should desist here, and stop its enquiries in silent raptures of admiration and praise, without presuming to pursue them in an object which was the astonishment of the highest Angels in the choirs of the celestial hierarchy. These glorious inhabitants of heavenly Jerusalem might be justly amazed on this occasion, and with reason cry out in the words of the Scripture, Cantic. c. viii. v. 5. *Quæ est ista? Who is she that cometh up from the desert, flowing with charms and delights, leaning upon her beloved, rising like the morning star, fair as the moon, choice as the sun, and terrible like an army in battle array?* c. vi. v. 9. for who can comprehend with what honour Jesus Christ received his most holy mother into his kingdom, and what measure of glory he bestowed on her? It is presumption to offer to dive into God's secret mysteries, by pretending to fathom the degrees of bliss to which she is raised. Let it then suffice, that we know her glory is now proportioned to the dignity of mother of God, which she bears, and to the transcendent degree of grace and merits which she possessed on earth. We justly extol her incomparable dignity in being the mother of her Creator, a dignity which no mortal tongue can sufficiently describe; and we may confidently say, that the glory with which Christ crowned her in Heaven is no less above the reach of our understanding. He enriched her here on earth with the most exquisite treasures of grace, when he first chose and exalted her to the super-eminent dignity of being his mother. We cannot therefore doubt but he has exalted her by the most excellent gifts of his glory, not only to the third Heaven, like St. Paul, but above all the Angels and Saints; for, if the Gospel assures us that he abundantly rewards those who, for his sake serve and relieve the least of his members on earth, we may justly conclude that he displays his liberality with the utmost profusion of great gifts in favour of a mother the most faithful to his graces, the most fervent in his love, and the most constant in his service. He cannot forget the affectionate piety with which she sanctified herself before she conceived him, and during the remainder of her life cherished and served him in his mortal body, and suffered with him by compassion on Mount Calvary; and now he repays her by the happiness to which he has raised her, and that in a manner so much the

more wonderful, as he is infinite in power, love and goodness, and as his ways are infinitely exalted above the ways of all his creatures. Hence it is; that the following words of St. John, in the Apocalypse, c. xii. v. 1. are applied to the mystery of the blessed Virgin's glorious assumption into Heaven : *There appeared a great wonder in Heaven ; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.* The Angels and Saints, says St. Francis of Sales on this text, l. 3. c. 8. " are here, only compared to stars, and the first of those to the fairest of these ; " but Mary is fair as the moon, and as easily discerned from " the other saints as the sun is from the stars. She is clothed " with a glory transcending that of the other blessed, as the " brightness of the sun surpasses that of the stars ; wherefore " she is said to receive a Crown, not like that of the other " saints, but a Crown of twelve stars is placed upon her " head."

The Scripture informs us that King Solomon having placed his mother Bethsabee on a throne at his right hand, desired her to demand whatever favour she pleased, and promised that it should be granted to her, because a son ought to refuse nothing to his mother. Can it be, then, imagined that a Son infinitely grander and holier than Solomon, a Son who never omitted the least duty of a child to his parent, a Son who came not to violate but to fulfil the very last iota, or the least tittle of the Law ; can it be imagined, I say, that such a Son will refuse any grace to a mother so holy, so acceptable, so eminently exalted as the blessed Virgin Mary ? Even when she was here on earth, her power of obtaining what she asked was great. A single hint of what she wished for was sufficient to induce our Lord to work a stupendous miracle to supply the wants of those for whom she prayed. It was at her request he wrought his first miracle at the wedding of Cana, by changing water into wine, John, c. iv. She interceded then and was heard ; Jesus, indeed, observed to her that *his hour was not yet come*, and that what she required was not a thing that belonged to him as man, nor to her as his mother, miracles being a work of the Divinity, in which the glory of God is rather to be attended to than any natural affection. However, he granted her request, and began to work miracles before his hour, in order to please her. If therefore, her prayers were so powerful then, how powerful must they be now that she reigns with him in the glory of Heaven ? What may we not expect from his mercy through her intercession, if we engage her by a true and solid devotion to espouse our cause, and to lift up to the Throne of God in our behalf those pure and spotless hands, which carried our Divine Redeemer here below on earth ? Have we not reason to believe and to hope, that our petitions will be more acceptable and more efficacious, when they are backed and supported with her

interest, and presented by her unspotted hands, than if we prayed alone by ourselves? She is full of charity, full of mercy, full of compassion, full of zeal for our salvation; she knows that it was for our sake her beloved Son laid down his life on the altar of the cross. By the light of glory, which she now enjoys, she can discover in the divine attributes many secrets that are impenetrable to nature and hidden from us, as she beholds God clearly and intuitively, and not through a dark cloud and mist as we do. She knows and sees our infirmities, wants, and necessities. We cannot doubt of her will to assist us, since her *charity is not evacuated in Heaven*, nor any way diminished, but rather perfected and increased, now that she is inseparably united to him who is charity itself. Neither can it be supposed that her power is diminished, or that she has lost her interest and credit with her Son, and through him, with his heavenly Father. On the contrary, the more she is honoured and exalted by him, the more powerful and the more prevalent her intercession must be; so that as her charity is now more ardent and more perfected, her power also, and interest, must be proportionably much greater than it was on earth, since she is now confirmed in divine grace, raised to a state of bliss, and crowned with glory at the head of the heavenly host. These considerations are more than sufficient to shew that the blessed Virgin is justly entitled to the special respect and particular veneration of the faithful, and that the devotion which the Church pays her is grounded upon a solid foundation; we cannot, therefore, with any colour of reason, hesitate upon the legality and propriety of it, as will further appear from a few observations on the nature of it. Our holy religion teaches us, that the essential devotion of every Christian consists in the invocation, worship and adoration of one God in three Persons, and that as God alone is to be adored and worshipped with divine honour, so he alone is to be prayed to as the giver of all good gifts, and he alone is to be served and trusted in as God and the Creator of all things. To give the supreme honour to any creature, even to the blessed Virgin herself, would be a gross error, which the Catholic Church is so far from approving or authorising, that she expressly condemned it in the Collyridian heretics, as St. Epiphanius testifies, T. 3. h. 78. We are sensible that though the blessed Virgin is the purest of God's creatures, she is still no more than his creature and consequently she can grant nothing of herself, nor claim any grace for us in her own right, or independently of the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the sole mediator of our redemption, and through whose merciful hands all graces and favours must come. It is for this reason that the following conclusion, *Through our Lord Jesus Christ*, is always understood, if not expressly mentioned in all the prayers of the Church, whatever words they may happen to

be addressed in, he alone having a just right, through his infinite merits, to obtain from his eternal Father whatever he asks for us, or is necessary for conducting us to the happy end of our creation. All our devotion is centered in God, performed on his account, and referred to his honour and glory; it begins in him, and terminates in and with him, as the first cause and last end of all things; it is to him we pray and direct our petitions even when we address the blessed Virgin, invoke her intercession, and entreat her to pray for and with us to our common Lord and Creator. In honouring her, we honour him, because we honour her for his sake and for being honoured and beloved by him; in revering and venerating her we venerate and admire the gifts and graces of God in her person. The honour of God is, therefore, so far from being hurt or diminished thereby, that it is, on the contrary, promoted and increased.

It is no dishonour to God to praise him in his saints, and to call upon his Angels to glorify him, as the Scripture frequently does. The more the number of his adorers and humble suppliants is increased, the more he is honoured. Is it not evident that every time we beg of the blessed Virgin to be a fellow-petitioner with us, we honour him more, to whom we beseech her to address our prayers, than we honour her, whom we only beg to pray for and with us? It is also evident that this devotion can be no more said to be derogatory or injurious to the mediatorship of Christ, than it was for St. Paul to have recourse to the prayers of the faithful, Rom. c. xv. v. 30. or for us to beg the prayers of our brethren here on earth, from an humble sense of our own unworthiness, and from a conviction that the *prayer of the just man prevails much with God*, James, c. v. v. 16. The Scripture informs us, that God himself has at different times sent sinners to saints, that they might intercede for them, and that by this means they have been frequently spared and rescued from the jaws of destruction, Gen. xx. Numb. xxi. Job, xl. Kings, i. vii. viii. What is more, Christ our Lord, seems to have recommended this devotion from the pulpit of the cross, by saying, *Behold thy Son; behold thy mother*, John, c. xix. v. 26. for, as he was pleased, in his great mercy, to raise us to the dignity of being the adoptive children of his heavenly Father, and his own brethren and co-heirs of his kingdom; so, by addressing the blessed Virgin in these words, *Behold thy Son*, meaning St. John, and in his person all the faithful, who were represented by him, he constituted them the spiritual children of his virginal mother, and placed them under her patronage and protection, that she might look upon them with the tenderness and compassionate bowels of an affectionate mother; and again, by saying to St. John, and in his person to all the members of the Church, who were represented by him, *Behold thy mother*, he gave him and us to understand, that he appointed the blessed Virgin the

spiritual mother of all the faithful, and as such, that we are to honour and revere her for his sake with all filial piety, respect, and devotion. It cannot be supposed that she forgets these words of her dearly beloved Son, or that she neglects the charge which he thus gave her with his last breath, or that she is no way interested or concerned for our eternal welfare. If the Gospel tells us that the rich man who was buried in hell, whilst poor Lazarus was translated into Abraham's bosom, was so solicitous for the salvation of his five brother's on earth, that he used his best endeavours to prevent their coming into that woful place of torments, can it be supposed that the blessed Mother of Jesus is less charitable or less zealous in procuring the salvation of those whom he recommended to her care, ransomed with his precious blood, and destined to be one day co-heirs of his everlasting kingdom? No, my brethren, Mary is both willing and able to employ her interest with her beloved Son in our favour, and to succour us in all our necessities. There is no grace but we may hope for from the divine mercy, through her intercession, provided we render ourselves worthy of her patronage by a true and sincere devotion. Such devotion consists not barely in honouring her with our lips, or invoking her intercession by word of mouth, but, as St. Bernard says, in honouring her with our hearts, and with our deeds and actions; it consists in following her example, and copying after the virtues of her holy life. It would be an impious presumption to expect to be saved by her intercession, without complying with the essential duties of religion, and renouncing those detestable vices, which, according to the Apostle, entail damnation on the unhappy offenders. It is in vain to flatter ourselves with the notion that she will patronize or befriend us, merely on account of paying her a daily tribute of a few vocal prayers, if in the interim, we continue to lead a vicious, disorderly, and scandalous course of life, and to crucify Jesus Christ over again by relapsing into mortal sin. She is, indeed, justly stiled *the refuge of sinners*; but she is not the encourager nor the protectrix of incorrigible rebels and libertines, who persist in the habit of trampling upon the commandments of God, and violating the sacred laws of his Church. She is the refuge of sinners, but of repenting sinners; who fly from God's justice to the throne of grace and mercy with contrite and humbled hearts.

Accept, O blessed Virgin, the small mite of my poor endeavours to vindicate thy honour, and promote a true and solid devotion to thee. Hail, O Virgin, *full of grace, and blessed among women*! May we all experience the salutary effects of thy powerful intercession. Pray for us now, we beseech thee, during the course of our mortal life; but particularly at the last and fatal hour which is to decide our eternal lot; stand by us then, as thou didst stand by thy beloved Son when he expired on the cross; obtain for us the great gift of final perse

verance and the grace of a happy death, that our souls may not become a prey to the malice of Satan, but may be safely conducted into the charming mansions of heavenly Jerusalem, there to join the angelic choirs in singing the immortal praises of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, for a never-ending eternity, which, my brethren, I wish you all, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Joys and Glory of Heaven.

Quærite primum Regnum Dei et justitiam ejus.—Mat. c. vi. v. 33.

Seek first the Kingdom of God and his justice.—Mat. c. vi. v. 33.

WHAT a grand and important research is it, my brethren, to seek the kingdom of God and his justice? This is, without doubt, an occupation the most worthy of a Christian, and to inspire us with courage and resolution our Blessed Saviour holds out to our view a never-fading Crown of Glory, and promises his faithful servants a very great reward in Heaven after the toils and labours of this mortal life. *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad,* he says, *Mat. c. v. v. 13. for behold your reward is very great in Heaven.* It was by the hope of this great reward that all the saints were animated to spend their days here in the most laborious exercises of penance, and the practice of the most heroic virtues. *Expecting the blessed hope, and the coming of the great God,* as the Scripture says, they contended to enter in at the narrow gate, and to carry the kingdom of Heaven by an holy violence to corrupt nature; their glorious examples should contribute very much to influence our conduct, and to excite us to walk in their footsteps, and to labour with assiduity and perseverance for the acquisition of the same happiness which they now enjoy. In vain do you allege your own frailty and weakness, for the saints were mortal men as you are; they had the same passions to conquer, the same obstacles to surmount, the same enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh to combat, and you have the same succours they had; you have the same faith to direct you, the same Gospel to follow, the same duties to discharge, and the same reward to hope for; you have been made for Heaven like them, to labour strenuously here, and to enjoy your Maker for all eternity hereafter. As this is the foundation of your hopes, so it should be the term of your wishes and the

and of all your actions and pursuits, What will it avail you to be attached to the enjoyments of this transitory life, and to labour like slaves for the convenience of a few moments, if you leave eternity to the hazard? What will it avail you to gain the whole world, if you swerve from the end of your creation and lose your souls? Does not the whole series of our redemption suppose that the heart of every Christian ought to be strongly possessed with this great principle, that his chief business on earth is to love and serve God in this life, and to aim at being eternally happy with him in the next? To impress your minds deeply with these sentiments, permit me, for your greater encouragement, to engage your attention at present with the consoling prospect of the glorious rewards that await the servants of God in the kingdom of Heaven. In the first point I will shew you, that Heaven ought to be the principal object of your wishes and desires; and in the second, that Heaven ought to be the grand subject of your labours and pursuits. Let us first implore the divine assistance, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, &c. *Amen.*

The many miseries and tribulations which we experience from the cradle to the coffin, prove that this world is not our home, but a place of exile and a vale of tears for the unhappy sons of Eve. Yet, alas! for the most part they resemble the thoughtless children of Israel, who being born in the captivity of Babylon, had no desire or notion of returning to Jerusalem, their native country, but grew fond of their bondage, and fell in love with their chains. If we consult religion, we shall not only be convinced of the strange blindness and lamentable insensibility of such preposterous conduct, but also be furnished with sentiments more noble and more sublime. The Gospel proposes to us an eternity of bliss in the kingdom of Heaven, as a most desirable object, and the most deserving of our attention and highest esteem. It unmasks the imposture of all worldly allurements, and lays open the vanity of all terrene objects; it exhibits to our view the Saviour of mankind with Diadems of Glory in his hand, inviting his faithful servants to enter into the joys of their Lord, and to receive that Crown of Immortality which he purchased for them by the effusion of his precious blood. Is not this animating prospect capable of inspiring us with a noble disdain of all the fading vanities of this miserable Babylon, and of making us frequently aspire to our native country, heavenly Jerusalem, in imitation of the Royal Prophet, whose soul frequently longed and thirsted for the Court and Palace of the Lord, as the heart pants and thirsts after the water brooks, according to the expression of the holy Scripture?

The Scripture, to accommodate itself to our weakness, sketches out a draught of heavenly Jerusalem, and represents it under the notion of those things which are valued and admired most here below. St. John, in the Apocalypse, tells us,

that the walls of this charming mansion of bliss are of precious stones ; its streets are pure and transparent gold ; its water is the river of life, more clear than crystal, and ever flowing ; its light is such that it needs neither sun or moon, for God himself shall be its light for ever. O celestial Jerusalem, *thou city of God*, cries out King David, *how lovely are thy Tabernacles, and what glorious things are said of thee?* Whole volumes have been written by inspired men to display the wonders of its perfections. All that is rich, grand and resplendent in the creation, has been called in to aid our conceptions and to elevate our ideas ; but after all, it must be acknowledged, that no tongue can express, no person can describe, no fancy can imagine the beauty, the splendor, the grandeur and magnificence of this glorious and divine abode. The great St. Paul, who was wrapt up to the third Heaven, tells us that there are such transcendent glories there *as the eye has not seen*, such transports of pleasure *as the ear has not heard*, and such a fulness of joys *as the heart of man cannot conceive*. The light of the sun, and the fixed stars, and all the glories of this universe, are but faint shadows, feeble representations, and weak glimmerings of the incomparable splendors which encompass the throne of God on every side ; there is light behind light ; there is glory within glory. It is certain, that our imaginations cannot be carried too high when we speak or think of the splendor and magnificence of that glorious and heavenly palace, where the whole art of creation has been employed to manifest the divine power and wisdom in the most magnificent manner ; for what must be the architecture of infinite power under the direction of infinite wisdom ? With what skill, with what glorious designs must that sacred habitation be beautified, where omnipotence and omniscience have so singularly exerted themselves ? How great must the Majesty be of that kingdom where the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords appears in perfect majesty, and discovers himself in the fulness of his glory to the celestial hosts and angelic choirs ? If he has made these lower regions so extensive and magnificent for the habitation of mortal and perishable beings, how extensive and magnificent must be the superior regions of Heaven, where, as the Prophet Daniel tells us, *c. vii. thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times hundreds of thousands of Angels and Saints, perpetually surround the seat of bliss*, with sweet alleluias and canticles of praise ? O could we for a moment draw aside the veil that interposes, and throw a single glance on these divine abodes, how soon would all sublunary possessions become tarnished in our eyes, and grow flat upon our taste ? One transient glimpse would be sufficient to captivate our souls, and engross all our faculties in such a manner, that Eden itself, after such a vision, would appear a cheerless desert, and all earthly charms would seem intolerable deformity.

However, though the kingdom abounds thus with an assemblage of all that can be imagined good, grand and delightful, without the least mixture of evil, yet it is not in all this, but in the clear vision and eternal enjoyment of God himself that the principal recompense of virtue, and the essential happiness of the blessed spirits in glory consists ; they see God there *face to face*, as he truly is in himself, and are more sensible of his divine presence than we are of the presence of those whom we look upon with our eyes ; they see him clearly in the very centre of their souls, and by the eternal contemplation of his infinite beauty, goodness and other divine attributes and perfections, they are quite inflamed and enraptured ; they shine and glow with his brightness, and are set on fire with seraphic flames of love. This love transforms them, in a manner, into the beloved object, and by a wonderful union puts them in possession of God himself, and consequently, in possession of all his perfections ; it makes them resemble and become like unto him, as iron cast into a furnace, and inflamed with fire, resembles and becomes like unto fire itself. O happy souls ! What can be wanting to satiate their desires and complete their joy, who thus have within and without them a vast ocean of felicity, with an absolute certainty that this felicity shall be as lasting as an endless eternity. Thousands of years pass away there like a day, and each day gives them the joy of thousands of years !

It is this lasting, this unspeakable happiness, that I propose to your consideration, when I speak to you of the joys of Heaven. O my brethren, what a blessed and desirable object is this ? How glorious ! How charming ! how worthy of a Christian soul to covet and thirst after ? Must we not be insensible to the last degree, if we forfeit such unutterable beatitude for a sordid interest, for a vile pleasure in sin ? O let us remember that we are created for a nobler end, born to higher hopes, and invited to a glorious state of immortality. Did we but make it our business to consider attentively what it is to dwell for ever in Paradise with God and his Angels and Saints, to converse eternally with the Fountain of all goodness and sweetness, to warble everlasting praises to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to live in perpetual raptures and extasies of joy and love ; such pious reflections would make us blush at our past indifference, negligence and tepidity, and cause an holy ardour to glow within our breasts. They would inspire us with vigour and activity in the service of God, sweeten every toil and labour, and carry us with pleasure through all the weary stages of our duty. In short, we would become all life, spirit and wing, and be wonderfully animated to run with alacrity, as well as with patience, the race that is set before us, as the Apostle speaks ; for every thing that appears light and easy to a Christian who has an Heaven of endless and incomprehensible joys always in view.

It was this blessed prospect that sweetened the rigorous austerities, fasts and mortifications of thousands of Christians in the primitive ages, and that turned the flames of martyrdom into a bed of roses. What tortures has not the barbarity of tyrants formerly invented to torment a St. Laurence, a St. Andrew, a St. Stephen, and numberless others? They were raised on gibbets, fastened to crosses, extended on wheels, plunged into caldrons of boiling oil, broiled on gridirons and burning coals, and yet, in the midst of all their excruciating pains, what had they in their mouths but canticles of joy and thanksgiving, and prayers for their cruel persecutors? From whence came this courage, this strength more than human? It was because they beheld the Heavens open over their heads. They beheld Jesus Christ, their Chief, presenting them with Crowns and Palms of Glory. At this sight, at this consoling prospect, they lost all other feeling. The hope of reigning eternally with Jesus Christ in the kingdom of Heaven, sweetened the bitter chalice of their sufferings; this was the cordial that gave them new life and spirits, supported them under their severe trials, made every labour seem light, every pain delightful, and rendered death, in its most terrifying shape, desirable and acceptable to them. Hence the Scripture relates, that the zealous mother of the seven brothers Machabees, who suffered a most cruel martyrdom under King Antiochus, cried out to the youngest of her seven sons in the midst of his torments, *O my child look up to Heaven* and take courage; suffer with constancy for a little while, that you may be happy for ever with your God; your sufferings will soon have an end, and a Crown of Glory will be the prize of your victory, and your great recompense for an endless eternity.

O let me entreat you, in like manner, my brethren, to have your faces ever turned towards heavenly Jerusalem, and to make it the principal object of your most sanguine desires, and the grand subjects of your labours and pursuits. Never, says St. Augustine, never lose sight of that blessed country for which you have been created. Raise your thoughts frequently above this world, and ascend in spirit into that true Land of Promise, which your blessed Redeemer has purchased for you at the expense of his blood. Take a serious view of that sacred mansion of bliss, and nothing will be able to shake your constancy, or prevail on you to depart from your duty. You will not grow weary in the service of God, nor betray such sloth and reluctance in complying with the precepts of the Church, and discharging the obligations of your respective states, if you have the immense joys of Heaven always before your eyes.

The labourer would faint in the vineyard if he was not cheered by the sight of the recompense he expects to receive. When you look up to the great recompense that is in store for the servants of God, you will account as nothing all the trouble

and pains you undergo in this life, for the sake of obtaining life everlasting. Every thing you do and suffer on this account will appear no more than a shadow, that bears no manner of proportion with an happy immortality. Nay, you will be astonished that the divine bounty grants so great a salary, so immense a reward for so little labour for such trifling pains. To obtain eternal rest would deserve eternal labour; to purchase an happiness without bounds, we should be willing to suffer for ages. Yet God, in his great mercy, does not require us to labour so much, or to suffer so long; he does not require a million or a thousand years, or even five hundred, but only desires us to labour the few years that we live on earth, during which he promises that the dew of his consolations shall not be wanting, and assures us that he will afterwards recompense our labours and our patience with a glory that has no end. He does not say, you shall not be partakers of my kingdom unless you withdraw yourselves from all society, unless you distribute all your worldly substance among the poor, unless you spill your blood for my sake, unless you perform many great and extraordinary exploits; but he has declared in the Gospel his acceptance of the widow's mite, and he has promised us his kingdom upon the most easy terms, and for the smallest good works, even for a cup of cold water given for the love of his blessed name, and for a moment of light and supportable tribulations suffered for his sake. He is satisfied with the perfection of our ordinary actions and common duties. He requires of us but a virtuous life, which the whole world may easily practise with the aid of his grace, and the practise of which contributes even to render this present life more pleasant and more comfortable, since, as the Scripture says, *A good conscience is a continual feast*. O how happy then are we, my brethren, to have so good a Father to deal with? What a pleasure, what a comfort it is to serve so bountiful a master, who does not overlook the least good action that we do, but grants the greatest of all blessings to his faithful servants, and infallibly crowns with glory those who persevere to the end? What greater encouragement can we desire to make good use of our time, to embrace every favourable opportunity of merit that we daily meet with in our respective states, and to treasure up for ourselves incorruptible treasures in Heaven before we are overtaken by the fatal night of death? Where is our faith, where is our zeal, if we continue any longer in a cold indifference for Heaven, and blindly place our happiness in the transitory enjoyments of this present life? O children of men, cries out the Royal Psalmist, how long will you be heavy of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lies? Shall nothing but woful experience open your eyes, and make you sensible of the folly of pursuing empty shadows, trifling toys, gilded phantoms and painted bubbles? O could you but hear the woes and lamentations of those unhappy souls, who heretofore placed

their last end in created objects, and now justly feel the weight of God's vengeance in the unquenchable flames of hell, you would be soon disabused and stand convicted of your error; for they would tell you, that it is downright folly and madness to fix your hearts and affections on the false security of temporal advantages; they would tell you, that those who seek their happiness here below are woefully mistaken, and will meet with nothing but disappointment in the end; for though they should enjoy whatever this world can afford, the most pleasing and the most delightful, if at the hour of death they change their shining apartments on earth for a grave in the gloomy regions of hell, all their past pleasures and enjoyments will serve only to renew the sad remembrance that it was once in their power to obtain the kingdom of Heaven. On the contrary, though all the miseries and suffering that ever befel the whole species of human nature should be centered in one person, if in the end he saves his soul and gains the glory of Heaven, he must be pronounced happy for all eternity.

What can rouse you, my brethren, from your insensibility, if all this does not? Will you labour incessantly to acquire perishable riches, and to rise and flourish in this world and take no pains to purchase the joys of Heaven and merit Crowns of immortal Glory? If the labour deters you, O let the great reward animate you, cries out one of the Fathers of the Church. Remember that *the labour is short, the recompence eternal*. Remember that Heaven is worth infinitely more than you are able to do or to suffer for it. All your pretended difficulties and imaginary hardships will soon vanish like a shadow, if in your spiritual combats, sufferings and penitential exercises, the thoughts of eternal glory be always present to your mind. It will encourage you to undertake every thing, to undergo every thing, to accomplish every thing for the sake of enjoying God for ever in his heavenly kingdom; for if the hopes of enjoying Rachel, made fourteen years hard labour appear sweet and agreeable to the Patriarch Jacob; if the prospect of possessing a country overflowing with milk and honey, raised the drooping spirits of the children of Israel, and animated them to undertake and pursue a most painful journey of forty years through the desert, shall not the hopes of enjoying God in the true Land of Promise, and of seeing his glorious and beautiful Majesty for all eternity be sufficient to inspire us with courage and resolution to surmount every difficulty that attends a virtuous life, and to perform with alacrity every duty that religion dictates and prescribes? O celestial Jerusalem! May we forget ourselves before we forget that thou art our inheritance and our blessed hope. O may we reject with Christian disdain all the solicitations of this sinful Babylon, and despise all the fleeting joys of this transitory life. O may we make thee the chief object of our contemplation, the centre of our desires,

the grand subject of our labours, the principle of our joy and consolation during the time of our mortal pilgrimage here on earth. O God of all glory! God of all goodness! Fountain of all sweetness! when shall we come and appear before thee in that happy kingdom, where thou art the crown and the great reward of thy servants? O when shall we arrive in the lovely tabernacles of thy glory, and contemplate thy infinite beauty face to face, without the interposition of either cloud or mist? O give us grace, we beseech thee to comply with the conditions that are necessary on our part in order to be entitled to eternal happiness. Strengthen our faith, encrease our hope, inflame our charity, and grant us the great gift of final perseverance, that being enriched with the treasures of thy grace here, we may be replenished with the riches of thy glory hereafter. Which is the blessing I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST:

On the Happy State of Grace, and the Unhappy State of Sin.

Et resedit, qui erat mortuus, et cepit loqui.—Luc. c. vii. v. 15.

And he that was dead, sat up and began to speak.—Luke, c. vii. v. 15.

THE subject of this day's Gospel is a renowned miracle wrought by our Saviour, in favour of a widow's son whom he was pleased to raise to life near the city of Naim in Galilee; for, as the Evangelist informs us, when Jesus on a certain day was approaching with his disciples near the gate of the aforesaid city, he met a multitude of people accompanying the funeral of a young man lately deceased. Having observed among the crowd, the disconsolate mother of the young man following the corse with an aching heart, and lamenting the death of her only son with a flood of tears, the tender bowels of his infinite mercy were moved to compassion, and so sensibly affected that he desired her to desist from weeping, and went over towards the bier on which the corse lay, and having touched it with his sacred hands, he said, *Young man, I say to thee, rise up;* which words he had no sooner pronounced, but the dead man immediately came to life, sat up, opened his eyes and began to speak in the hearing of the astonished multitude, to the inexpressible joy of the poor widow his mother, who glorified God for having raised her son to life, and restored him to her in per-

fect health. This afflicted mother bewailing the corporal death of her son, was a figure of our holy mother the Church, overwhelmed with grief and affliction for the spiritual death of as many of her children as unhappily plunge themselves into the dismal state of mortal sin; which is called *mortal*, because it kills the soul of the sinner by depriving it of the supernatural life of sanctifying grace, and rendering it liable to eternal death and damnation, according to these words of the Scripture, *The wages and salary of sin is death*; the death of the soul here, and a second death hereafter.

O what a dreadful evil must mortal sin therefore be? What a frightful change does it cause in the soul of a Christian? What a long train of misfortunes does it entail on her? To excite you to an utter abhorrence of so foul a monster, and to a due esteem for sanctifying grace, is the design of the following discourse. In the first point, I will lay before you the signal advantages of living in the happy state of grace, and the sad consequences of falling from it into the dismal state and affection of mortal sin. In the second point I will shew you, by what means the grace and friendship of God may and ought to be recovered, when unhappily forfeited by mortal sin. Let us previously implore the divine assistance through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, greeting her with the Angel, *Ave Maria*.

St. John, the beloved disciple of our Lord, could not refrain from transports of holy joy, admiration and astonishment, when he reflected on the eminent degree of honour, dignity and happiness, to which Christians are elevated at the time of their baptism by the sanctifying grace of God. *See*, cries out this Apostle, *what charity God has given us, that we are named, and in reality are raised by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the high rank of being the children of God!* That we should even be admitted into the number of God's servants, would be an honour preferable to that of swaying a Royal Sceptre and wearing an Imperial Crown. What an incomparable honour and dignity must it then be, to be raised to the rank of the children of God, and of course the friends of God and heirs of his heavenly kingdom? Should we not conceive a due esteem for, and set the highest value on this glorious quality, this noble title, this super-eminent dignity, which has been conferred on us through the merits of Jesus Christ, at the baptismal font? Should we not labour with all possible care to support this dignity, to preserve this grace, and live up to this august character, which is far superior to all the glory of Solomon, to all the grandeur of the greatest Monarchs of the earth, and to all the temporal advantages that the world can offer us? Though we were masters of all the treasures of the earth, it would be better to risk them all, nay, even to forfeit them all, rather than hazard the loss of God's grace by mortal sin, or to fall thereby from the high rank of his children, his

friends, and the heirs of his eternal kingdom. Whatever other loss we may happen to sustain, whatever other disgrace we may incur, whatever other misfortune we may meet with, it is but trifling and insignificant in comparison of the loss, misfortune and disgrace, that is incurred by falling into mortal sin. We lose nothing worthy of our regret, provided we do not lose the grace and friendship of our God. As long as we continue united to him by sanctifying grace, we may be truly said to be rich and happy, though we should be stripped of all the goods of fortune, and of all the enjoyments of the world. As long as we continue in the happy state of grace, we find it, in a super-eminent degree, whatever the malice of our most inveterate enemy could deprive us of. In this blessed state a Christian possesses his God, who is the whole happiness of the Angels and Saints in Heaven. In this blessed state his soul is a living temple of the Holy Ghost, embellished, beautified, and enriched with celestial gifts and blessings. In this blessed state God is his joy, his treasure, his portion, his inheritance, his asylum, his consolation in all adversities, and in him alone he finds all that can be the object of his most sanguine wishes and desires; so that he may then truly say with St. Francis, *My God and my All*. He may exult with the devout recluse in the desert, and say, The world may indeed strip me of the external goods of fortune, *but no one can take away my God from me*.

On the contrary, whilst a Christian is separated and divorced from God by mortal sin, he is really poor, abject, wretched and miserable, though he should be possessed of the most ample fortune, and exalted to the highest degree of worldly honour that is attainable here on earth. From the very moment he falls into mortal sin he ceases to be the favourite of Heaven, a child of God, and an heir of his eternal glory; he becomes in an instant God's enemy, an object of his hatred, a victim of his justice, a slave of Satan, and a confederate of hell. He is degraded, disinherited, and divested of all right and title to everlasting happiness. His soul is no longer a sanctuary and temple of the Holy Ghost; it is profaned and defiled by mortal sin, and rendered an abominable sink of filth and corruption. From one of the most noble beings in the creation it becomes one of the vilest, one of the most despicable of all creatures; it loses all its former beauty, is stripped of all its noble prerogatives, robbed of all its spiritual treasures and precious ornaments of grace, and reduced to the lowest ebb of poverty and nakedness. Nay, mortal sin reduces the unhappy sinner to a kind of nothing in the order of grace, or rather to a state absolutely worse than nothing, or that of not being at all, as King David remarked, when opening his eyes to behold the disorders of his soul, he cried out in Ps. lxi. *O Lord, what a dreadful change has sin wrought in me, as soon as a blind passion got the better of my reason, and took pos-*

session of my heart! I found myself by a just desertion of thy grace *reduced to a mere nothing, and I did not know it.* Hence St. Paul, 1 Cor. iii. could not find a more energetic expression to represent the nature of sin, than by calling it *nothing*. If I have not charity, says he, if I am not in the grace of God, *I am nothing*; though by the force of my faith I should transport mountains, and suffer the most racking tortures, *it avails me nothing*, if I am void of charity and stripped of the grace of God.

Whilst we are united to God by sanctifying grace, and ingrafted on Jesus Christ like the branches of the vine that are joined to the trunk, all the good actions that we deliberately perform are acceptable to God, and meritorious of life everlasting. Every act of virtue that we do in the interim acquires for us a new degree of grace, and entitles us to a new degree of happiness; and, consequently, as many virtuous actions as we perform in the state of grace, so many Crowns of Glory are reserved for us in the kingdom of Heaven. This is a consoling truth, that should engage us to live always in a state of grace, since we thereby have it in our power to amass for ourselves immense treasures of merit in Heaven, and thus render ourselves eternally great, eternally glorious, eternally happy.

But alas! it is equally true, that if we have the misfortune to incur the displeasure of God, and forfeit his sanctifying grace by mortal sin, we not only lose the merit of all our past good works as long as we continue in that unhappy state, but also we become like unto withered and lopped off vine branches, which draw no juice from the root, and are therefore incapable of bearing fruit; for as in a state of natural death, it is impossible to perform any vital function or action of life; so in the state of spiritual death or mortal sin, we cannot perform any action of spiritual life, or meritorious of life everlasting. Hence the prophet Ezechiel says, c. xxviii. *If the just man withdraws himself from his justice, the virtues he has practised shall be no more remembered*: The Lord will make no account of them, nor recompence them in the order of glory, unless they revive and recover the life of grace by a true repentance. As for the good works that are performed in the state and affection of mortal sin, they never revive or recover the life of grace, as they were never animated by it; they are dead in the sight of God, void of condign merit, and unworthy to be entered in the book of eternal life, or ranked in the number of those virtuous actions to which *the Upright Judge has promised a Crown of Justice*, as the Apostle speaks. However, a sinner is not for this reason to omit the practice of good works, or to neglect the duties of religion, because he has unhappily fallen; for, though the works that are done in the state of mortal sin are not worthy of God's complacency, nor meritorious of life everlasting, yet they are not altogether unprofitable, but rather of great advantage, because they may contribute to withdraw the

sinner from the dismal gulph of mortal sin, and dispose him for the sacraments of reconciliation; they are the only resource he has then left, and therefore, far from neglecting the practice of such works, or transgressing the general obligations of Christianity, because he is in mortal sin, he should for this very reason redouble his diligence; he should fast and pray the more, he should give more abundant alms to the poor, and apply himself with greater ardour to the practice of good works, in order to avert the wrath of God and soften his justice. Who knows, says the Prophet Jonas, if the God of mercy will not be thereby touched and engaged to look down with pity on the sinner, and grant him the grace of a true repentance. It was by such dispositions that the Ninivites averted the indignation of Heaven, and the humble publican obtained mercy and pardon; and it is also by similar means that every sinner ought to labour to rise out of the abyss of mortal sin, and re-instate himself in the grace and friendship of God, as I will shew you in the sequel.

What you are to resolve upon, my brethren, when you have unhappily lost God's grace, and fallen into mortal sin, is, to hasten without delay to repair your loss, and to rise from the dismal death of sin by a speedy and sincere repentance; for to defer applying this healing balsam will only serve to add to your misfortune, to widen the dreadful wounds made by sin, and to render your cure the more difficult; it will serve only to strengthen your fetters and to remove you farther from God, farther from the way of salvation. If by imprudence or mistake you had lost the good graces of an earthly monarch, or incurred the anger of some powerful friend to whom you are indebted for many signal favours, and who could easily oppress you with the weight of his power, would it be necessary to exhort you to have recourse to every means in your power in order to appease him, and re-establish yourselves in his favour? Your own interest, and the apprehension of feeling the effects of his anger, or of losing the advantages that might be expected from his benevolence, would sufficiently press you to recover his friendship without loss of time. If robbers had entered into your house at night, says the Prophet Abdias, c. v. and had carried off all that was precious and valuable therein, how great would your trouble and concern be? With what speed and diligence would you not pursue them, in order to recover what they had carried off? When you are attacked by a dangerous fit of sickness, do you not endeavour to remove the cause of your complaint, and to re-establish your health with speed, with care and solicitude? You do not wait for the last extremity to call in a physician and apply for a remedy. You submit to the most painful cures; you swallow the bitterest pills; you suffer the sharpest operations of physic and surgery. Should you not be more diligent, more impatient, more solicitous to recover the grace of God, and the spiritual life and health of

your soul? Should you not be more grieved and concerned for the loss of it than for any other loss whatever? Is it not the greatest of all losses? Is there any thing so rigorous or so painful in the salutary remedies of penance and mortification that you should not willingly undergo, in order to heal your spiritual maladies, and re establish yourselves in that happy state of grace from which you fell? As soon as you are sensible of your fall, you should rise, with the prodigal child, and return to your God and your heavenly Father without delay, at the first call of grace which invites you to return to him. If you seek him immediately, whilst he is not far distant, you may find and regain him without any great difficulty; but if you wait until he retires far from you, it is only by extraordinary efforts that you will be able to recover his favour and friendship. Hence the Prophet Isaias says, *seek the Lord whilst he can be found; call on him whilst he is nigh*, c. lv. v. 7. Do not delay to answer him as soon as he calls on you; never defer until another time to follow his inspirations. If he stretches out his hand this day to assist you, embrace the offer readily; if he strikes at the door of your heart, let him have admittance immediately; if he casts on you a glance of his merciful eyes, make use of it, as Peter the Apostle did, to weep bitterly for your crimes, and to wash them off by tears of a sincere repentance; for if you hesitate and let slip the precious and decisive moment of grace, you will run the risk of never meeting the same favourable opportunity again. The day, perhaps, will come, when you may in vain cry out for mercy; for mercy abused is often changed into inflexible justice. Thousands of sinners have been convinced of this terrifying truth by woful experience; relying on the deceitful hope of the time to come, and referring their conversion to a future day, as if they were masters of futurity, or could command the grace of God whenever they were willing to demand it, they have been justly disappointed; their projects have been baffled and their vain expectations blasted; their days have been cut short, and they have been hurried out of the world by a sudden and unprovided death, at a time when they least expected it. This was the case of the five foolish virgins mentioned in the Gospel: they dallied and neglected to trim and furnish their lamps when the bridegroom called upon them, and therefore they found the gate of mercy afterwards shut in their face; all their tears and entreaties were not sufficient to procure them admittance; they were justly excluded from the nuptial banquet; the bridegroom became inflexible, and condemned them to be banished out of his sight for ever.

This plainly shews how dangerous it is for a sinner to procrastinate the great work of his reconciliation with God, and reject the heavenly calls and graces, by which the Father of Mercies invites him to return speedily to a proper sense of his duty. Your God at present says to you, my brethren, by the

preachers of his Gospel, what the Angel formerly said to St. Peter in the prison, *Surge velociter*, Arise with speed. Throw off the shackles and fetters with which you are bound; disengage yourselves from the galling yoke of sin under which you miserably groan. Renounce those detestable habits of drunkenness, impurity, detraction, injustice, cursing, swearing and blaspheming, by which you are enslaved; sleep no longer in the arms of perdition, but rise without further delay out of the lethargy of sin, and Jesus Christ will enlighten you; he calls on you by those pious emotions which he at present excites in the bottom of your hearts; he calls on you by those celestial rays of light which he darts on your understanding; he calls upon you by the good thoughts and secret inspirations which you inwardly feel; he calls on you by the many edifying examples you behold, and by the salutary instructions and exhortations which are delivered to you from the chair of truth. If you reject all these graces and prove deaf to all these calls, your neglect and contempt of them may, perhaps, fill up the measure of your iniquities, and put the last seal to your eternal reprobation. The Lord, provoked by your obstinacy and resistance to his gracious calls, will, perhaps, in his turn, shut his ears to your entreaties, and be deaf to your petitions, when you will wish to return to him and to implore his mercy; he will, perhaps refuse you his powerful assistance in the hour of your greatest distress, and let you die in your sins, according to these words of the Scripture, Prov. c. i. v. 24. *I have called upon you, and you have refused to hear me, you have despised my counsel, and neglected my reprehensions; I will also, in my turn, laugh at your destruction, and not hear your cries in the hour of your tribulation*, and again, Jo. c. vii. v. 34. *You shall seek me and you shall not find me, and you shall die in your sins*, c. viii. v. 24.

If, therefore, any in this congregation should happen to be so unhappy as to be involved in the guilt and affection of mortal sin, let me conjure them to *hasten to the throne of grace with confidence that they may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid*, Heb. c. iv. v. 16. Let me entreat them to open their eyes before they are opened by the scorching flames of hell; and to repent in time, lest they may have reason hereafter to repent in vain for a never-ending eternity. The precious blood of Jesus will cry out to Heaven for mercy, and will plead their pardon and wash away their sins, provided they sincerely unite their voice, their hearts and penitential tears with it. O Blessed Redeemer, do not suffer us to be so ungrateful to thee or so cruel to ourselves, as to frustrate the designs of thy mercy through our own obstinacy. Grant, we beseech thee, the gift of perseverance to those happy souls which are already in the state of grace, and the gift of a true contrition to those who are labouring under the galling yoke and miserable bondage of sin, that being restored to the sweet liberty of thy children, and being

united to thee here by grace, they may be united to thee hereafter in the kingdom of thy glory, for ever and ever. This is the blessing that I wish you, my brethren, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF AUGUST.

On the Festival of St. Augustine.

Sapientiam ejus enarrabunt gentes, et tandem ejus enuntiabit Ecclesia.

Ecclesiastic, c. xxxix. v. 14.

Nations shall declare his wisdom, and the Church shall proclaim his praise.

Ecc. c. xxxix. v. 14.

ON this day we solemnize the glorious memory of one of the most illustrious doctors and most eminent saints that ever adorned the Church of Jesus Christ, I mean the great Augustine, who was *great* indeed by the many excellent qualities which he received from nature, but *greater* by those that divine grace favoured him with; *great* by his prodigious talents, *greater* by the good use he made of them; *great* by his learning, *greater* by his humility; *great* in the esteem of all nations, *greater*, by many degrees, in the sight of the Lord. In him we plainly see that man, though weak and insufficient of himself, is capable of the greatest exploits with the assistance of God's grace. Whoever considers the wonderful change the grace of God wrought in him, the boundless liberality with which it was bestowed on him, the exact fidelity with which he corresponded with it, and the unparalleled zeal with which he defended it, must acknowledge that he was a prodigy of divine grace in every shape, and that there is no saint after the great St. Paul, to whom those words of the Apostle are more applicable: *By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace has not been in vain in me.* Not unlike the supreme planet of nature, this bright and transcendent genius was eclipsed for a time, and involved, in his early days in the dark errors of infidelity, until, as the Scripture phrase expresses it, *God commanded light to shine forth from the darkness*, and dispersed the thick clouds wherein he was enveloped. Yes, my brethren, it was the all-powerful hand of God, that wrought this wonderful change in Augustine, and opened his eyes by the luminous rays of his grace, which, when it pleases, is able to triumph over the proud spirit of man, and purify the most corrupt heart in an instant. It can form sons for Abraham out of the hardest

rocks, and convert vessels of mud and vessels of ignominy into vessels of gold and vessels of election. From a deluded sinner, and a blind abettor of Manicheism, it converted the young Augustine into a mirror of sanctity, and a most illustrious luminary of the holy Catholic Church ; so that I may venture to say, that the errors of Augustine's youthful days serve only as shades to set off the lustre and beauty of his eminent virtues, and to render the triumph of divine grace the more conspicuous in him. By his wisdom and learning he became a pillar and support of the Church, and of its chief ornaments by his seraphic piety. It is under these two qualities I will endeavour to represent him to you, as they seem to complete the character of our glorious Patriarch ; by the one he zealously defended the truth and propagated the light of the Gospel ; by the other he practised the most perfect maxims, and established the spirit of the Gospel. Behold, in a few words, the plan of the following discourse, and the subject of your favourable attention. Let us previously implore the assistance of Heaven, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, whom the Angel of the Lord greeted with these words, *Ave Maria*.

Tagaste, a city in Africk, gave birth to the great Augustine, about the middle of the fourth century, and beheld with joy and surprize the lofty towering spirit of her admirable offspring. Nature was so profuse in bestowing on him her most exquisite gifts, that there was nothing in human sciences but what he attained to by the strength of his genius ; nothing so intricate or abstruse but what his vivacity unravelled. Methinks I see him in his early days wandering in the schools of Aristotle and Plato, amusing himself with logical definitions, divisions, syllogisms and catagories, running blindly after an empty phantom of glory, and bidding adieu to his native country in order to give public lectures of eloquence to the first cities of the world, and to gather with raptures the fading laurels and flowery garlands with which Rome, the mistress of polite literature, was then accustomed to crown her learned sons. Young Augustine, being as yet a stranger to Christian humility, courted nothing more than popular applause and the acquisition of a great name, resembling herein the mighty giants mentioned in the book of Genesis, who undertook the building of a most lofty tower, with a view to aggrandise themselves and render their name illustrious and immortal. Hear himself afterwards bewailing his folly and blindness in the bitterness of his soul. I sought with pride, says he, what humility alone could make me find ; fool as I was, I left my nest, imagining myself able to fly, and I fell to the ground ! Ah ! Lord, how blind I was, passing from sect to sect, and flying away, like perfidious Cain, from thy face, in order to serve false Gods. Whilst he resided at Carthage, and filled that renowned city with the fame of his name and the admiration of his learning, he had the misfortune to fall into the errors of the Manicheans, and having become in a

short time a chieftan among them, he gave a new lustre to their impostures by his eloquence. The fall of so great a genius should be a warning to those who presume too much on their own natural abilities, and make their own private judgment the sole rule and standard of their belief; for whoever steers by this narrow compass in matters of divine faith, and pretends to fathom the profound mysteries of religion with the short line of human reason, will surely be entangled in his own reasonings, like young Augustine, and must expect to wander in errors, to float on uncertainties, and, as the Apostle speaks, to be tossed to and fro by every blast of different doctrines, like unto a ship, which, when destitute of pilot and rudder, and left to the mercy of the waves, is tossed about from rock to rock, from shoal to shoal.

It was whilst young Augustine was thus plunging blindly into an abyss of errors, that the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, being moved by the reiterated supplications and abundant tears of the pious Monica, was pleased to look down propitiously on him, and to grant him the grace of a true conversion, as he had granted the like favour to Saul the persecutor, at the request of St. Stephen, the first martyr of the new Law. A bright ray of divine grace began at length to dawn upon him and disperse his blindness; the scales fell from his eyes, as the Scripture says of Saul, and like him, he heard a voice from Heaven that roused him out of the lethargic sleep of sin, and made him resolve, without further delay, to cast off the works of darkness, and put on Jesus Christ; a melting softness trickled through all his veins; an unusual tenderness seized on his heart, and a stream of penitential tears began to flow. St. Ambrose, who had foretold his mother Monica that it was impossible a child of so many tears should perish, was destined by Heaven to be the Ananias or spiritual director, who was to conduct him into the path of salvation. The holy bishop preached to him; Augustine heard the voice of his pastor with docility and submission; he captivated his understanding in obedience to the faith of Christ, and began immediately to relish the pure doctrine of the holy Catholic Church; the very name *Catholic* attracted him to her communion. He was wonderfully taken with the majesty of her hierarchy, and the splendor of her worship and sacred ceremonies; he admired her authority, which, as he remarked, was begun by miracles and confirmed by antiquity, and by a lineal succession of bishops and pastors, descending directly from the Apostles. In short, he embraced her religion, from a full conviction of its being a divine institution, and was baptised in the thirty third year of his age. No sooner was he received into the pale and bosom of the Catholic Church, but it appeared visibly that he was destined by divine Providence to be a prodigy in the house of God, and to serve, like the pillar of cloud and of fire that

marched before the Israelites in the desert, to make light and splendor march before him, and to kindle flames of charity in the breast of every being. After the example of St. Paul, he began immediately to signalize his zeal against the very sect which he had previously espoused with so much heat and animosity; he laid open the monstrous errors of the Manicheans, who had formed a system of religion upon the composition of what was most profane in Paganism, carnal in Judaism, abominable in magic, and sacrilegious in heresy; he combated their impious tenets with the intrepidity of an invincible champion, until he made truth and virtue triumph over error and immorality. In those days hell had opened its gates, and poured out a deluge of several other creeping heresies upon the face of the earth. It spawned an Arius, a Donatus, a Pelagius, a Nestorius, an Eutyches, with a swarm of other heterodox teachers, who like wolves, under the clothing of sheep, insidiously attacked the flock of Christ, and led multitudes astray by the sophistry of their subtle, captious and fallacious arguments. But, glory be to God, who has promised never to abandon his Church, this formidable troop served only to multiply the combats, and to signalize the victories of the great Augustine, for he alone, with the grace of God was enough for them all. He was a wall of brass, where all their united efforts split; he was a buckler, impenetrable to the strokes and shafts of error; he was a two-edged sword, proper to attack falsehood, as well as to defend truth from its poisoned arrows. He pursued all the sectaries of his days through all the various mazes and labyrinths of their pernicious dogmas, until he gave a fatal blow to the many-headed hydra; he encountered a faction of above four hundred schismatical prelates leagued together, and to their great confusion he made the arms of truth glitter before the eyes of an admiring world. He confuted no less than one hundred and fifty-nine Donatist bishops in a general conference held at Carthage, and persuaded the greatest part of them to return to the pale of the Catholic Church. When all Africk stood affrighted at the appearance of the dangerous heresy of Pelagius, a Scotchman, who under the pretext of defending free-will against the Manicheans, attempted to sap the very foundation of Christianity, and to introduce a religion purely natural, the zeal of Augustine was roused. As he owed his conversion to divine grace, he could not be silent and inactive, when he saw the grace of Jesus Christ so daringly attacked, and the price of his Blessed Redeemer's precious blood so sacrilegiously trampled under foot. Wherefore, like another David he courageously entered the lists with the insolent and haughty Goliath; I mean the presumptuous Pelagius, and after a noble combat of ten years he crushed the head of the British serpent, and raised numberless trophies upon the ruins of his subtle errors. It would be an endless

task to enumerate all the labours and fatigues he underwent in defence of the Church, and in vindication of her doctrine against all the emissaries of hell. The subject is too immense for any particular description, and therefore I must confine it to some few general expressions, and be content with drawing the panegyric of our holy Patriarch in miniature. The voluminous writings which he has transmitted to posterity plainly shew, that since the days of the Apostles there never was any one more conspicuous, more zealous or more indefatigable in maintaining the faith of Jesus Christ, and preserving the true religion in its native lustre. He explained to the utmost what the Gospel contains the most difficult, and expounded the sublime mysteries of the Trinity, Incarnation and Grace, as far as mortal man can pretend. General Councils have extracted their canons from his works; Sovereign Pontiffs have taken their degrees, Universities their decisions, Divines their lectures of speculation and moral dignity, Preachers their sermons and instructions, the Polemic Writers their strongest arguments against every species of unbelievers. Nay, the most learned Christian pens have enriched themselves with the spoils of the great Augustine, and seem, with a kind of emulation, to have displayed their rhetoric in honouring him with the highest eulogiums, and in representing him as a precious vessel of election and prodigy of divine grace, singled out by Heaven to dispel the clouds of infidelity, to unravel the most hidden mysteries, and to propagate the pure lights of the Gospel by his wisdom and learning. Some writers have not hesitated to say of him in the warmth of their zeal, that as all the rays of light which had been dispersed during the three first days of the creation, were centered in the body of the sun on the fourth day; so, in like manner, all the luminous points of learning which had been divided during the three first centuries among the successors of the Apostles and the Pastors of the Church, seem to have been centered in the fourth century in the person of the great Augustine. Let us now consider him practising the most perfect maxims, and establishing the spirit of the Gospel by the sanctity of his life and the splendor of his eminent virtues. It is what I promised to shew you in the second point.

Learning and sanctity, if directed to their proper objects, are the most shining qualities of a Christian soul. This is the double spirit which great men breathe from Heaven, and which fills the mind with wisdom and inflames the heart with love. The great Augustine was completely happy in these two characters; by his learning he shone forth like a refulgent sun in the temple of God, and was therefore deservedly stiled the Oracle of his age, the Eagle of Doctors, the Tongue of the Church, the Master of Truth, the Trumpet of the Gospel, the Champion of Grace, the Genius and Soul of the National Councils of Africk, the Scourge, the Mallet and Thunderbolt

of Heretics, who were never able to withstand the force of his eloquence, or to resist the spirit of wisdom that spoke through his mouth and wrote with his pen. All the great and solid perfections of a Christian life appeared in him with a beautiful gloss, that edified the faithful and attracted universal esteem and veneration. He was not only a Doctor that possessed every science, but also a Saint that practised every virtue. He was a good Pastor, who had nothing more at heart than the welfare of his flock. He was a Bishop, who fulfilled all the sacred functions and arduous duties annexed to that high station, with such exactness and fidelity, that St. Paul seems to have drawn his picture, in drawing the picture of a worthy Bishop. For the space of five and thirty years he resided in the episcopal see of Hippo, like the sun in its meridian, and from thence he diffused the splendor of his doctrine and the rays of his sanctity all over the universe. With the trumpet of the Gospel he laboured incessantly to overturn the walls of the sensual Jericho, to stem the torrent of iniquity, and to enforce the strict observance of every religious duty. He sacrificed the sweet repose of his convent, where he enjoyed the comforts of Heaven, to the immortal toils in the Lord's vineyard, in order to promote the glory of God and to procure the salvation of souls, both by his word and example. Nothing escaped his vigilance and assiduity; he roused the zeal of his clergy, regulated the manners of the laity, prescribed rules for arriving at the summit of evangelical perfection, broke the bread of life to the little ones, instructed the ignorant, converted infidels, united schismatics, reclaimed profligates, retrenched abuses, banished vice, restored virtue, and reduced to practice all the works of mercy, both spiritual and corporal.

It is a rare thing, says St. Bernard, to find a man who seems little in his own eyes, when he appears great in the eyes of the world. But this is no longer a paradox; for it is certain that Augustine undervalued and despised himself, when the rest of mankind beheld him with admiration and sounded his praises. Whilst they proclaimed his merits, he was accustomed to reply that God, sometimes makes use of feeble means and contemptible instruments to perform the greatest wonders. For his own greater humiliation, and to balance in some measure the sublime idea the world had of his sanctity, with the sincere acknowledgment of his youthful errors, he composed the Book of his Confessions, the reading of which gives a person a truer notion of his perfect contrition, profound humility and fervent piety, than all the tongues of eloquence are able to express. There you will find, that he fulfilled the character of the true Gospel penitent, and that he became a perfect model of self-denial and mortification, dead to the world, to its vanities, to its pleasures, crucified to Jesus Christ and enamoured of his bounty. When I speak of his repentance, you are not to imagine that it consisted in

a few equivocal exercises of piety, or superficial practices of religion. No, my brethren, his repentance was solid, true and lasting; his sorrow was efficacious; he never relapsed. It was sincere; it produced worthy fruits of penance, for he began it in the spirit of humility, and he completed it by charity. A grief universal penetrated his soul, and a love ineffable transported his heart. The penance of his heart was far more ardent than that of his body, and the emotions of his soul surpassed, by many degrees, what appeared in his actions.

Where is it we shall find one whose heart was inflamed with the rays of divine love like his? Are not all his writings chequered with the marks of this celestial influence? Who can describe the transports, raptures and extacies of his pious soul in his *Divine Meditations*, in his *Manual*, in his *Soliloquies*, and in his *Commentaries on the Psalms of David*? Do but open them wherever you please, and you will see the fire of divine love shining in every line; you will be persuaded that his pious soul breathed nothing but the purest flames of charity; and it is for this reason that he is usually represented with the symbol of a flaming heart, transfixed with the arrows of charity, and casting forth blazing rays of fire as out of a glowing furnace. O how often does he bless the happy instant of his return to God? How frequently does he regret every moment he had spent in the oblivion of him? When shall I see thee, my God! says he in one of his raptures; when shall I possess thee whom my heart sighs for, and my soul is impatient to behold? Ah, I loved thee too late; too late, alas! have I begun to love thee, O Beauty, ever ancient and ever new! Permit me, therefore, to begin my course again, that every moment of my life may be filled with tokens of my love, or rather consume me at present with the flames of thy eternal brightness, that I may no longer be divided from thee. O eternal verity, it is for thee I languish; thou art my God and what is not thee is nothing to me. Thou art a thousand times more amiable than the trifles and pleasures which thou dost banish. I am now full of thee, and rejoice in thee, for thou art my riches and my glory. Thy sacred word assures us, that we know not whether we are vessels of honour or disdain, worthy of love or hatred; but after examining my heart I feel I love thee, I know I love thee, nor can I doubt it; nor is my fear servile, or my hopes self-interested. Quench the fire of hell; I do not dread it because I love thee. Destroy Heaven; my joy, my felicity is only in loving thee. These, and a thousand such like overflowings of the heart, were the constant occupations of the seraphic Augustine.

Never was a heart occupied with a more active, a more constant, a more grateful, a more tender, or a more universal charity; never was any genius more artful in finding out

ways and means to testify the love he had for God and for his neighbour. Not satisfied with the apostolic labours of three and forty years after his conversion, he carried his views to future ages, and planted a religious order, that it might, after his death, continue to practice the most perfect maxims and counsels of the Gospel, and spread the grace of salvation to the extremity of the known world. The rule he drew up was deemed so wise, so prudent, and so perfect, that forty-six different orders in the Church have since embraced it, and the religious of his own institution became so numerous in a short time, that, exclusive of the multitudes that emigrated afterwards into the various kingdoms of Europe, there was scarce a city or town in Africk without a monastery of one or two hundred of them, even in his own days. May I not then say, as St. Basil was chosen by God to be the founder of religious orders in Asia, and St. Benedict in Europe, so, in like manner, St. Augustine seems to have been chosen to be the patriarch and first founder of religious institutions in Africa. Ecclesiastical writers count among his disciples, a great number of illustrious Saints and learned Doctors and Prelates, besides two thousand five hundred of the religious of his order, who suffered martyrdom in the bloody persecution that was raised by the Goths and Vandals. At length our glorious Patriarch was called from this life to the enjoyment of a better. Exhausted with labours, enriched with merits, after enlightening the earth with his glory, as the Scripture says of the Angel in the Apocalypse, he died a martyr of divine love, and sunk, like the phoenix in its native flames, in the midst of the palm branches he had planted and replenished with his own spirit. You have now, my brethren, heard how the great Augustine propagated the true light and perfect spirit of the Gospel by his wisdom and sanctity. But what impression should all this make in your souls? What advantages are you to derive from hence? If you wish to comply with the pious intentions of the Church in solemnizing the annual festivals of the saints, and announcing the panegyrics to the faithful, you are to admire devoutly the wonders of grace and mercy that Heaven has displayed in their favour: You are, as the Royal Prophet directs, religiously to honour, thank, glorify and praise the Lord in his saints, for the large profusion of the precious graces, gifts and blessings, which he has vouchsafed to confer on them; you are likewise to endeavour to render yourselves worthy of their patronage and intercession, by following their example, and copying after the virtues they practised here on earth. You will, perhaps, tell me that you are not blessed with the brilliant talents of Augustine, that you are not possessed of his profound wisdom and extensive erudition, that you are not qualified like him to be a champion of religion, to argue, defend, prove, dispute, convert and reclaim unbelievers and sinners from their errors

and evil ways. But will you tell me that you are not qualified, like Augustine, to correspond with the grace of God, to submit to the sweet yoke of the Gospel, and to hearken to the voice of the pastors and spiritual guides who have been appointed by Jesus Christ to lead you into the ways of salvation? Will you tell me that you are not qualified to become good Christians and Catholics, or to believe all that Christ has taught, and practice all that he commanded? Will you tell me you are not qualified, like Augustine, to cast off the works of darkness, and renounce those detestable habits of drunkenness, cursing, swearing and blaspheming, which render so many unfortunate sinners, a disgrace to Christianity, a scandal to the Church, and a reproach to their profession?

Though, my brethren, you are not endowed with the abilities of an Augustine, you are sufficiently qualified to prove and defend the truth and purity of your religion by the most convincing of all arguments, that is, by the purity of your morals and your edifying conversation. You are able to instruct your children and domestics in the fear of the Lord, and to convert and reclaim your strayed brethren by your exemplary conduct. Though you have not zeal enough to aspire to the perfection of Augustine, you have it in your power to imitate, at least in some degree, his conversion, his repentance, his humility and meekness, his piety and devotion, his love for God and for his neighbour. These virtues are within your reach, and centered in the sphere of your duty, and unless you bear some resemblance of Augustine herein, you cannot expect to be favoured with his intercession, nor to be crowned with him hereafter in the glory of Heaven.

The same grace that converted and sanctified him, is able to convert and sanctify you, let your case be ever so desperate, let your past sins be ever so numerous. You may still become vessels of election and favourites of Heaven, like Augustine, provided you return to the Lord your God in the sincerity of your hearts as he did, by a speedy, solid and efficacious repentance. The merciful arms of Jesus Christ are still open to embrace you; his precious blood will plead your pardon and cancel your sins if you renounce and detest them, in due time, with a contrite and humbled heart.

Grant this grace, O father of mercies and God of all consolation, to us all assembled here to praise and honour thee in thy saint. We request it unanimously and most humbly, in the name, and through the infinite merits of thy beloved Son and our dear Redeemer Jesus Christ, and we confidently hope to find acceptance through him in thy sight, and to be admitted one day into the charming mansions of everlasting bliss, which he has purchased for us by the effusion of his precious blood; and which, my brethren, I heartily wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Sanctifying the Sabbath-Day.

Factum est cum intraret Jesus in domum cujusdam principis Phariseorum Sabbato manducare panem, et ipsi observabant eum.—*Luc. c. xiv. v. 1.*

It happened when Jesus went into the house of a certain Pharisee to eat bread on the Sabbath-day, and they were watching him.

St. Luke, c. xiv. v. 1.

THE Gospel of this day shews us, on the one hand, to what extremes the Scribes and Pharisees were hurried by their excessive pride and great want of charity; and on the other hand, it represents to us with what patience our Blessed Redeemer bore their insolence, and with what sweetness and meekness he endeavoured to reclaim them. It happened that he went into the house of a certain Pharisee to eat bread on the Sabbath-day, where the Pharisees took care to be present, not with a view of listening to his heavenly instructions, but of watching his conduct and censuring his most innocent actions. He foresaw that they would be scandalized at a miracle which he was about working, and blame him as a Sabbath-breaker for healing a man ill of a dropsy, who came to implore his divine assistance; but neither the fear of their censures, nor the evil dispositions of their hearts, were able to hinder our charitable Redeemer from pitying and relieving the afflicted and distressed objects who had recourse to him in their necessities, teaching us by his example, that we are not to be deterred from our duty, nor drawn from the practice of good works by the apprehension of being unjustly censured and misrepresented. The Evangelist tells us, that he first asked the Doctors of the Law and the Pharisees then present, *If it was lawful to heal the sick on the Sabbath-day?* Then he took hold of the sick man, restored him in an instant to his perfect health, and sent him away full of joy and penetrated with sentiments of gratitude. However, in order to remove the unjust scandal which the Pharisees had taken at this miraculous cure, he condescended so far to their weakness as to reason them out of their error, by asking them if an ox or an ass of their own should happen to fall into a pit, which of them would scruple drawing it out on the Sabbath-day? This question covered them with so much shame and confusion, that they could make no reply in their own defence; for their insatiable avarice, which was

represented by the dropsy that our Saviour cured the poor man of, influenced their reason so far, as to make them conclude that it was no violation of the Sabbath to take their ox or ass out of a ditch on that day; but their vanity and excessive desire to distinguish themselves by an exact and rigid observance of the Law, together with their want of fraternal love, made them overlook the distress of their neighbour and deem it unlawful to cure him on the Sabbath-day, under the specious pretext of piety. Thus it is, that the enemy of mankind often deceives sinners with the shadow of virtue, leaving them the appearance of conscience, and persuading them to scruple at trifles whilst they neglect the substance, and transgress the most essential duties without remorse. The observance of the Sabbath is indeed an important duty; two extremes, however, are to be carefully avoided herein. First, the rigid superstition of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were scandalized at seeing our Blessed Saviour performing works of mercy on the Sabbath-day, and at his disciples plucking a few ears of corn and eating them, when they passed through the corn fields and were pressed with hunger. Secondly, the impiety and irreligion of those Christians, who are neither afraid nor ashamed to spend the Sabbath in drunkenness and rioting, in dissipation and licentiousness, in idle amusements and lawless practices, by which they pervert this day of grace and mercy into a day of wrath and perdition. To remedy such evils, and to excite you to a religious observance of the Christian Sabbath, is the design of the following discourse, wherein I will lay before you, first, the nature and original institution of the Sabbath; and secondly, the manner in which the obligation of sanctifying it is to be complied with. Let us previously invoke the light and assistance of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, &c. *Ave Maria.*

Amongst the various sinful abuses and disorders that reign at present in the very midst of Christianity, there is scarce any one that seems to call more loudly on the Preachers of the Gospel for an exertion of their zeal, than the scandalous practice of profaning the Sabbath-day. The sanctification of our souls, and the conduct of our lives the other six days of the week, depend, in a great measure, on the sanctification of this day, because a regular observance of it would contribute very much to facilitate the observance of the other divine precepts; and on the contrary, a constant transgression of this duty is generally attended with a total neglect and oblivion of the other great duties of religion. Nay, it is hard to conceive how people of business, servants and other laborious Christians can be said to serve God, and to take proper care of their souls, if they do not sanctify the Sabbath-day, because they are entangled in worldly cares all the remainder of the week, and engaged from morning till night in a continual drudgery, that

takes their thoughts off from their spiritual duties, and hinders them from applying themselves properly to the service of the Lord their God, and to the salvation of their souls.

Permit me then, my brethren, to echo and re-echo these words of the Lord in your ears, and to imprint them deeply in your hearts, *Remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day*. The very terms in which God commands us to observe this precept, indicate its singular importance; for, not content with laying a simple injunction on us, as he does in the other nine commandments, he cautions us in a particular manner by the word *Remember*, which is prefixed to this commandment only, and not to the rest; and he awakes our constant attention by charging us never to forget this holy ordinance, which plainly shews that it is a law of the highest importance, and that it is to be most religiously observed. It is partly a moral and indispensable precept of the Law of Nature, and partly a ceremonial and changeable precept of the Mosaic Law. Inasmuch as it points out one particular day in preference to another to be sanctified, it is a ceremonial precept; but inasmuch as it directs us to set apart some portion of our time, or to lay out one day in the week for the practice of those religious duties which tend immediately to the worship of the Creator, such as prayer, adoration, praise, thanksgiving and sacrifice, it is a moral and unchangeable precept of the Law of Nature; for it being impossible for us, in the present order of Providence, to employ our whole time, or to spend every day of the week in these holy exercises, the Law of Nature and the light of reason dictates, that we are indispensably bound to set aside some part of our time for these sacred purposes, and to devote at least one day in the week in a special manner to the worship of our Maker, and to the spiritual concerns of our souls. Our whole time, it is true, belongs to God, and he has the strictest right to our homage every day. We owe ourselves entirely to him; it was for the purpose of serving him only that we have been created, and therefore, we are to perform all our works and actions every day, in our respective states, with a view of pleasing and honouring him, and in obedience to his holy will. Besides this general duty of referring all our worldly actions and employments to God's honour and glory, and thus making them subservient to the great affair of our eternal salvation, right reason tells us that, as we naturally allot certain proper times for the several necessities of our bodies, we should likewise allot certain proper times for the care of our souls, and for paying a special tribute of our homage and adoration to the Divine Majesty. The Law of nature does not point out one particular time, or one certain day in the week more than another for the performance of these duties; so that the precept of sanctifying the Sabbath, in this respect, is no more than a ceremonial precept, liable to be changed both as to the particular day of the week, and the particular man-

ner of sanctifying it, ever since the Mosaic Law was abrogated by the death of our Blessed Saviour, and ceased to be any longer binding as to its ceremonial precepts. The appointment or determination of one particular day, preferably to another, depends on the positive ordinance of God, or of some lawful authority deriving a power from him, to make whatever regulation or change herein, as to the fixed time, that it judges most expedient.

The Almighty God himself, who in the space of six days had made Heaven and earth, and the sea and all things therein contained, was pleased in the old Law, to determine and appoint a particular day by an express commandment. From the very beginning of the world he appointed and reserved Saturday, or the seventh day of the week, to be consecrated in a special manner to his honour, in memory of, and in thanksgiving for the great benefit of the creation. He allowed mankind to employ the other six days in the management of their temporal affairs, and worldly occupations and cares; but as these are apt to draw the thoughts of mortal men from heavenly things, and hinder them from having their minds continually fixed on God's infinite perfections in holy contemplation; like the Angels and Saints in Heaven, he blessed the seventh day in particular, and ordered it to be kept holy; he sanctified it, and called it the *Sabbath day*, that is, the day of rest, because he then rested from the work of the creation, or ceased from the production of any new species of creatures. However, though the Sabbath day had been thus instituted and sanctified from the very creation as the birth-day of the world, yet mankind, after the fall of our first parents, having grown languid and slothful in the service of God, the precept of keeping holy the Sabbath was shamefully neglected for the space of near two thousand five hundred years, according to the testimony of Philo, a learned Jewish historian; for which reason it became necessary to renew and re-establish it in the Law of Moses, when the ten commandments were published on Mount Sinai in two tables of stone. Hence it is that the Lord then expressly said in the third commandment, *Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day*, giving the children of Israel to understand by the word *remember*, that the sanctification of the Sabbath was not a new precept, but had been instituted long before that time, and reminding them of the strict obligation they were under to observe it according to its primitive institution, thereby to acknowledge God's sovereign dominion over them, and their own entire dependance on him, and thus prove themselves to be the chosen people and servants of the true and living God. He commanded them at the same time to refrain from all corporal labour and servile works, and not to employ their domestics or servants on that day; no, not even their beasts of burden, lest the use of them might be an hindrance to the due observance of the Sabbath, and

that they might learn from thence, to treat their servants, not with cruelty or hard heartedness, but with charity and humanity, since they were commanded to spare the very beasts themselves, by letting them rest from hard labour one day in the week: they were not even allowed to kindle fire in their houses, or to dress their meat on the Sabbath day; this was to be done on the preceding day. The Scripture tells us also that whilst they were travelling through the desert, they were obliged to gather as much of the heavenly manna for their food on every sixth day, as was sufficient to support them on that day and on the Sabbath, or seventh day, that ensued. And what is very remarkable, the double quantity of manna that was thus gathered on the sixth day, never corrupted, as it always did, whenever they gathered more than one day's provision on any other day of the week, the Lord encouraging his people by this miracle, to rely on his providence, and not to be too solicitous about thetime to come. To enforce a faithful compliance with this holy ordinance the more effectually, he promised all kinds of temporal blessings to such as religiously observed the Sabbath day, and he denounced the most dreadful punishments against all transgressors. The book of Numbers, c. xv. informs us, that he expressly ordered a man to be stoned to death by the people for having gathered a few sticks on that day, which struck such a terror into the children of Israel, that they and their posterity ever after became most rigid observers not only of the weekly Sabbath, but likewise of the several other great festivals, which God himself ordered them to observe in the course of the year, in memory of, and in thanksgiving for the great temporal blessings which Heaven had conferred on them. It was in the Apostolic age that the Sabbath was translated from Saturday, the seventh day, to Sunday, the first day of the week. The Scriptures make no particular mention of this translation, though it took place all over Christendom since the infancy of the Church, which shews the necessity of admitting Apostolical traditions. However, this translation of the Sabbath from one day to another made no substantial alteration in the third commandment, inasmuch as it contains God's eternal Law, and the moral and natural duty of man; for in this respect the commandment continues still unchangeable and indispensable, though it was liable to be changed as to whatever was only ceremonial, or inasmuch as it prescribed the seventh day of the week in particular to be kept holy. The best authority we have for the weekly Sabbath being thus translated, and for Sunday being substituted in the new Law in the place of Saturday, the ancient Jewish Sabbath, is the testimony and ordinance of the holy Catholic Church, which being ever guided by the Holy Ghost, wisely appointed the first day of the week to be the Christian Sabbath, and properly called it in the Scripture language, *the Lord's day*, Apoc. c. i. our Lord having chosen it in preference to any other day, for communicating his

most gracious favours and blessings to mankind, and for displaying the most excellent works of his wisdom and power, according to the remark of the ancient fathers. It was on a Sunday that our Lord Jesus completed the great work of our redemption by rising from the dead on a Sunday, by sending down the Holy Ghost on a Sunday, and by forming and establishing his Church on a Sunday; and, since the work of our redemption is a greater work than that of our creation, the day on which this great work had been fully accomplished, was justly deemed the most proper day in the week to be nominated and sanctified as the Lord's day, and fitter to be the Christian Sabbath and the day of public worship in the new Law of the Gospel, than the day on which God had rested from the work of the creation. Hence it follows that we are equally obliged to keep the Christian Sabbath on Sunday, as the Jews were to keep holy the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday, the divine commandment being in this respect substantially the same, and remaining still in all its force; but in what manner are we to comply with this obligation? It is what I promised to shew you in the second point.

As the day for keeping holy the Sabbath is different in the new Law from the day appointed in the old Law, so the manner of sanctifying the Sabbath in the Law of the Gospel is also different from the manner prescribed by the Mosaic Law. Christians are not to carry the observance of their Sabbath to a ridiculous degree of superstition, like the Scribes and Pharisees, who censured our Blessed Saviour for healing the sick and performing other works of mercy and charity on the Sabbath. Neither are we to be misguided by an erroneous conscience, like the Jews mentioned in the first book of Machabees, c. ii. who imagined that they would be guilty of a violation of the Sabbath, if in a just war they took up arms on that day in defence of their own lives; or if they even laboured to extinguish a raging fire that surrounded them on every side and threatened them with immediate destruction; for since *the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*, as our Blessed Saviour says, Mark, c. ii. v. 27, it plainly follows that such things as are really and absolutely necessary for the preservation of our own life, or the life of our neighbour, are not forbidden on the Sabbath day, but the unborn Law of real necessity and charity to our neighbour may dispense in many things, which otherwise should not be done on the Sabbath; for charity is the end of the Law, and therefore no Law can hinder works of real charity. Nay, the Law of charity and mercy must go before all outward sacrifice and service, according to these words of Christ himself, in c. xii. v. 7. of St. Mathew, *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.*

The precept of sanctifying the Christian Sabbath, or Lord's day, is perfectly clear and explicit on this point. It contains two parts, or is partly an affirmative-precept and partly a nega-

tive precept, that is to say, it commands something, and it forbids something; it commands us to spend the better part of the day in religious duties, or to employ such a portion of the Sabbath in spiritual exercises of piety and devotion that we may be truly said to *keep it holy*. Hence, besides the various exercises of piety, which are commanded in general, and left to our own private devotion, that every one may choose such as are fittest and properest for himself, we are ordered in particular, by the highest spiritual authority on earth, to assist with devotion and attention at the public worship and great sacrifice of the Church, this being the most solemn act of religious worship, and one of the most essential duties of a Christian. However, it is not to be supposed that the Church, in thus commanding her children to assist devoutly at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass on the Lord's day, means that this is sufficient, since the Church by her precept neither did, nor could ever intend the least derogation from the divine precept of *sanctifying the whole day*; on the contrary she ceases not to inculcate the indispensable obligation of perfectly complying with the divine precept in its full extent, by constantly admonishing the faithful to have recourse on the Lord's day to the holy sacraments and fountains of grace with the necessary dispositions, to meditate devoutly on the sacred mysteries of their redemption, to thank, praise, and glorify the Lord for all his benefits, to read pious books and assemble their children and domestics together in common prayer, to be more liberal than usual in their alms to the poor, and more diligent in performing deeds of charity and works of mercy both spiritual and corporal. In short, the Church directs us not only to assist with devotion on the Lord's day at the divine service in the forenoon, but likewise to be present at exhortations, catechistical instructions, vespers, sermon and benediction in the afternoon, whenever we can, without great inconvenience. As to the negative part of the precept of sanctifying the Lord's day, it forbids all unnecessary servile works, that is to say, all laborious, corporal and mechanical employments, such as are followed by tradesmen and workmen for payment and hire. In a word, it forbids every thing that is incompatible with the sanctification of the Sabbath, or that may be an hindrance to a religious observance of it, to the end that our hearts and minds, being free from worldly incumbrances and from the distracting cares of life, may be elevated to the contemplation of heavenly objects, and that we may have no business to take us off from attending to the service of God, and to the spiritual concerns of our souls. It is for this end that all servile works and worldly occupations are prohibited on the Lord's day, and not to make idlers of mankind, or as if such works were intrinsically evil in their own nature. No, my brethren, the time that would be employed at them on any of the other six days of the week, should on this day be spent in such exercises of piety as render a day truly holy

and the corporal rest, which we are commanded to observe, should be sanctified and consecrated to God; for if the rest prescribed on the Lord's day, was to be a mere corporal rest, or a bare cessation from manual labour, it would rather be a disadvantage than an advantage, as it would serve to discourage industry and to countenance sloth and indolence. This rest must, therefore, be sanctified in such a manner, that, whilst our bodies rest from laborious occupations, our souls may rest in the Lord, which is the true Christian Sabbath, and, as St. Augustine says, Ep. 55. a figure of the spiritual rest and enjoyment of God on the great and happy Sabbath of eternity, which we expect hereafter, and which the Apostle, Heb. c. iv. v. 9. calls the *sabbathizing of the people of God*.

I leave yourselves now to judge how much those Christians are mistaken, who imagine themselves to be religious observers of the Lord's day, if, after sleeping till ten or eleven o'clock in the morning, they spend about half an hour in hearing the last Mass, and refrain from servile works the remainder of the day, but trifle it away in sloth and indolence, in idle conversation, in vain amusements, diversions, pastimes and parties of pleasure, in reading novels, romances, play-books and stories of gallantry, in revelling, dancing, card-playing, or the like profane occupations, which are by no means suitable to the sanctity of the Christian Sabbath. Such people may, perhaps, be deemed to comply with the ecclesiastical precept of hearing Mass, provided they assist at it with devotion and attention from the beginning to the end; but it is hard to conceive how they can be truly said to comply with the divine precept, *Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day*, when they keep no more of it holy than the short time that they are assisting at Mass. Surely the *Sabbath day* is not sanctified by idleness or by dissipation; nor can it be supposed to be *kept holy*, as the Lord expressly commands, if only an hour, or half an hour of it be kept holy, since an hour or half an hour is *not the day*, but only the twenty-fourth, or the eight-and-fortieth part of the day. If Christians of this description be highly reprehensible and remiss in their duty, how much more culpable must they be who are so far from sanctifying even this small part of the Lord's day, that they do not allow themselves time to be present at the august sacrifice of the altar, but spend the whole day in such a manner that they seem to celebrate a festival of Bacchus, and of Satan himself, rather than the sabbath of the living God? Christians, let me appeal to your own consciences, not with a view of confounding, but of admonishing you as my dearest brethren in Christ, as the Apostle speaks, how frequently is this day entirely devoted to pride and vanity, to luxury and debauchery, to sporting and gambling, to drunkenness and rioting, to intrigues and unlawful combinations? What shocking scenes of impiety present themselves to our view on every side? What volleys of horrid blasphemies and imprecations do we hear re-

sounding from every quarter? What numbers of drunken men and women do we not meet on the flags, sleeping away the fumes of intoxicating liquors, or reeling along from one side to the other in a condition that disgraces the human species, and degrades it even beneath the brute creation? Are not the dram-shops and public houses crowded more on this day than on any other day in the week? Are not the adjacent streets and public high-ways often stopped with a multitude of spectators, who seem to exult in encouraging their fellow creatures to strip themselves naked, without the least regard to Christian modesty, and thus to decide their quarrels and disputes, by fighting like wild beasts, and tumbling each other into the channel like dogs? What groups of unfortunate females and young libertines are seen infesting the common passages, and like so many emissaries of hell, seeking to entrap and ruin the souls that the Redeemer of the world came to save by the effusion of his precious blood? Yes, my brethren, it is thus that the only day which the Lord has specially reserved for his own service, is shamefully devoted to the service of the devil by several who go under the name of Christians, but to the great dishonour and scandal of religion live worse than Turks. O what a subject of sorrow and affliction must it be to those who have any zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of souls, to behold impiety erecting its head with such barefaced effrontery, and irreligion spreading its baneful influence with such licentiousness?

Is it not enough to call forth the woes, the tears and lamentations of a Jeremiah to see the *Sabbath of the Lord God of Hosts thus abused, mocked and derided*? The very day, alas! that has been instituted for worshipping our Creator, for purifying our souls, and for expiating the sins which are committed on the other six days of the week, is the very day on which the Lord is most grievously offended; so that what St. John Chrysostom formerly said of some wicked libertines at Constantinople, is applicable to several unhappy Christians of this depraved age: There is more wickedness committed by them on the Lord's day, says this holy doctor, than on any other day, nay, perhaps, more than the whole remainder of the week, although nothing is so strictly forbidden on this day as sin, sin being the most servile of all works, as it renders the sinner a slave of the devil. This made St. Augustine say that it would be better to spend the Lord's day in digging, ploughing, spinning and carding wool, than in committing sinful and immodest tricks at hops and dances. Nay, it is the received opinion of several eminent divines, that sins committed on the Lord's day are more grievous than if they were committed on any other day, especially if they be external and of a scandalous nature, because the circumstance of this sacred day aggravates the malice of such crimes as are committed thereon, as the circum-

stance of an holy place aggravates the malice of the crimes which are perpetrated therein.

Let me, therefore, my brethren, once more sound the divine commandment in your ears, and impress it deeply on your minds, *Remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day*. Let me entreat you to beware of perverting this day of mercy and grace into a day of wrath and perdition. Let me beseech you to refrain from the servile works of sin, and to practice the virtues of a Christian life every day, but more particularly on this day of purification, this day of sanctification, which belongs to God, that after the toils and labours of this mortal life, you may possess the joys and glory of Heaven, and repose in the Lord for ever and ever ! O merciful Jesus, give us grace to be faithful in discharging all the obligations of this holy day, and wise in reaping all the advantages which thou hast designed on it for the good of our souls. O may we make it our constant study to advance on this day in our way to Heaven, and since it is an emblem of everlasting rest, may we labour on it to withdraw our hearts from the perishable things of this world, and to be united here to thee by fervent acts of adoration, love, praise and thanksgiving, to the end we may be eternally united to thee hereafter in the kingdom of thy glory : Which is the happiness I wish you all, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTE- COST.

On the Love of our Neighbour.

Diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum.—Mat. c. xii. v. 39.

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.—Mat. c. xxii. v. 39.

OF all Christian virtues there is not any one which our Blessed Redeemer has oftener or more warmly recommended than charity, of which the love of our neighbour is a branch. It is remarkable, that when the young man mentioned in the Gospel, asked him what he should do in order to obtain eternal happiness, the Son of God proposed to him no other precepts but those which concern the virtue of charity, *Are you willing*, said he, *to enter into life everlasting ? Observe the commandments, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not*

steal, &c. In short, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Yes, my brethren, this is the whole scope of a Christian's duty, all other precepts are included in this, and by discharging this one obligation we fulfil the whole Law. Hence, as St. Jerom informs us, when St. John the Evangelist, through the infirmity of old age, was no longer able to entertain his audience with a long discourse, he contented himself with this brief exhortation, *My brethren, love each other.* The faithful being at length tired of constantly hearing the same admonition repeated, took the liberty to ask *why this frequent repetition?* Whereupon he made an answer worthy of the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ: *Because, said he, it is the command of the Lord, and the observance of it alone suffices for life everlasting.* O divine reason, capable to make an impression on the heart of the most obdurate! Since, therefore, it is the command of God that 'we love each other, since our Blessed Redeemer has so strongly recommended it to us, and made this love the characteristic of his true disciples, it is of the utmost importance to make you thoroughly sensible of this great duty which is the foundation that all the commandments of the second table of the decalogue depend on, and to propose to you the model, according to which you are to exert yourselves in the practice of it. Wherefore the motives that are to induce us to love our neighbour, and the model of this love, shall be the two parts of the following discourse. The motives which are to engage us to love our neighbour shall be the first point; the model of this love shall be the second point, and the whole subject of your favourable attention. Let us previously implore the intercession of the immaculate Mother of Jesus, greeting her with the words of the Angel. *Ave Maria.*

St. Augustine remarks in his Twelfth Book of the City of God, that the Almighty created a prodigious number of fishes in the sea, birds in the air, and beasts in the field, as a stock from whence all the rest should proceed unto the end of time; but he was willing that all mankind should descend from one common father, to engage us thereby to love one another, and to teach all men to regard each other as brethren in the order of nature. Though we should therefore resist all the tender sentiments that religion suggests, if we but hearken to the voice of nature, it cries out to us incessantly, that we ought to love our fellow creatures, to whom we are allied by the ties of blood, and with whom we have an intimate connexion, and live united together in society. The very heathens themselves entertain a reciprocal love and mutual friendship for each other, and are taught by the light of nature, that they ought to do by their neighbour as they would wish to be done by. This is a duty that reason dictates, instinct inspires, and that the Author of Nature has implanted in the centre of our hearts for the best of purposes. However, if we consider the order of grace, we shall find that there is a wide difference between the

love that subsists among the Heathens and the love that should reign among the faithful. The different kinds of human love and affection are generally influenced by flesh and blood, and spring from selfish views and principles purely natural; but the love of charity which the Gospel commands, has more noble and more elevated motives, and is the product of faith and grace. It is supernatural in its motives, and universal in its object; it is an extension of the same divine virtue by which we love the Lord our God. By it we are to love our neighbour on God's account, and for God's sake, because he is made after the image and likeness of God, and redeemed with the precious blood of his beloved Son. He is a child of God by creation, and his adopted Son by grace; for which reason we are ordered in the Lord's Prayer to address God as *our Father*. All the works of his hands are the objects of his love; but he has a particular tenderness and affection for man, who is the master-piece of infinite art, and who excels amongst all sublunary beings. It was for his use alone that this vast and stately fabric of the universe has been erected, and for his service all other creatures have been destined. Nay, the very Angels themselves, who are the brightest beings of the creation, have been appointed to be the guardians of man, to conduct him with security through the paths which lead to life everlasting. Are not these cogent arguments and most pressing motives to oblige us to love our neighbour? He who is worthy of the love of a God, is he undeserving of our esteem? You will tell me, perhaps, your neighbour has treated you ill, he has blasted your character, he has stained your reputation by calumny and detraction, he has supplanted you in trade, he has made you appear odious in the eyes of the world, as far as malice could represent you in the blackest colours. But if you listen to St. Paul, he will tell you that this injurious treatment must not cancel the debt of charity, or cause a breach of that love you owe your neighbour. Hear this reason; God, says he, recommends to us the love of our brethren, because when we were his declared enemies by sin, when we had forfeited all claim, all pretensions to Heaven, Christ became for us a victim of reconciliation; he died an ignominious death to redeem us from hell, and to reinstate us in the favour of the Almighty. He ransomed us not with corruptible gold and silver, but at a dearer rate, with his own most sacred blood; we should, therefore, love even our greatest enemies, in consideration of this love and affection which the Almighty has testified to us. This is what St. John likewise inculcates in the first of his epistles, where, after expatiating on the infinite love of God towards mankind, in giving for them his only Son as the price of our redemption, he infers from this prodigy of charity the obligation we are under *to love each other*, 1 Ep. c. iv. v. 11. Consider then, my brethren, that man who has offended you, as ennobled, ransomed and all covered with the blood of Jesus

Christ, and he will not appear vile or despicable in your eyes. This consideration will lead you to reason thus with yourselves : This person, whom I hate and despise, is still the object of the tenderness and affection of my Saviour. It was for him, it was for me, that this loving Redeemer spilt his precious blood. This should be an indissoluble tie of mutual love and friendship between him and me. I will, therefore, no longer bear an enmity to my neighbour, but love every one who is the friend of my Saviour and of my God, since a common friend unites those whom the most violent enmity had separated. Thus it is, that the spirit of charity should influence our conduct ; thus it is that we are to shew ourselves the true disciples of Jesus Christ ; for it is by this test alone that all men shall know us to be his disciples, as he himself declares in St. John, c. xiii. v. 35.

What can be more reasonable than that this charity should constantly reign amongst all Christians? By the grace of baptism and regeneration we are all become children of the same heavenly Father, members of the same mystical body, supported by the same hand of Providence, and destined for the same end, the same eternal happiness. Our Blessed Saviour has broken down the wall of separation that stood between us ; he has united us in the same worship, the same faith, the same sacraments, the same doctrine, the same discipline ; he has formed one flock, one Church, one sheepfold out of all the tribes, all the nations of the earth. Are not these so many inducements to bind us closely together with the strictest ties of charity ? How shameful then would it be, to behold christians unhappily divided amongst themselves ? Must they not be stripped of all these tender sentiments which both nature and religion inspire, if they suffer such a division to take place ? In vain do we flatter ourselves that we love God, when a spirit of discord and disunion, envy, malice, and hatred prevails between us and our neighbour. *Whoever declares he loves God, says St. John, 1. Ep. c. ii. v. 20. and hateth his brother, he is a liar ;* though his life should otherwise seem devout, pure and angelical, he deceives you, he deceives himself ; his piety is no better than hypocrisy and illusion, if he be void of charity and fraternal love for his neighbour. In short, he is no better than a *sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal*, and a mere empty *nothing* in the sight of God, if he fails to have charity. The distinguishing character of this divine virtue is given by St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, 1. Ep. c. xiii. *Charity, says he, is patient, it is bountiful, it envies not* either the temporal or spiritual welfare of a neighbour. *It does no prejudice to any person, either by its actions or by its discourse. It is not puffed up, it is not ambitious,* nor does it pretend to domineer over the most despicable. *It is so disinterested* that it will sooner give up its right than enter into disputes which might disturb Christian peace. If you give the offence, it fancies it

has given the occasion; if you treat it with contempt, it thinks you do it but justice. All the faults that can be excused, it represents them in the most favourable light; it is afflicted when they are too visible, and is overjoyed when it finds any thing praise-worthy. It does not rashly judge, censure or condemn another, nor endeavour by malicious comments to misconstrue his actions, and turn his virtues into vices. *It thinks not evil*, but *believes* all that savours of piety to be true and genuine. *It suffers* without murmur, without complaint. *It bears* with the most imperfect, and finds even in their failings something that makes them worthy of its indulgence. God himself is its motive. Neither the indignity nor the ingratitude of men can stop the course of its liberality; but, in imitation of the great Creator, who causes his sun to shine on the unjust as well as on the just, it dispenses its favours with a liberal hand to the deserving and to the unworthy. The sick and suffering poor, in cellars and garrets, who are the most lively instances of human misery, and whose ulcerous bodies, under tattered garments, excite horror in the spectators, are the favourite objects of charity's tenderness and compassion. It still discovers, with the eyes of faith, something in them worthy of respect and veneration. The blood of their Saviour, which is the price of their redemption, is an embellishment that makes them agreeable in its sight, and the more nature abhors to approach such disagreeable objects, the more charity is pleased to comfort and assist them. It is the character of human love to seek its own private interest; it shews itself in empty compliments, in protestations of friendship, in offers of service, in deceiving promises, and in all those other disguises which policy has invented to ensnare men by a fair outside; but Christian charity is not counterfeit; its words do not belie its actions, and its actions are always conformable to its sentiments, because sincerity is essential to it, as the Apostle observes, 1 Tim. c. i. v. 5. *Charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and from an unfeigned faith.* It never acts by the low and earthly views of interest and vanity, which generally influence the actions of men, but studies to do what is pleasing to God. If it does good, it takes care that it may not be seen; if it gives alms, it hides them in the bosom of the poor; it draws a veil over the gift, that the benefactor may not be discovered. The pleasure it feels in doing a good action is to it a far greater recompense than all the grand applauses of men. As all it does is for God's honour and glory, so it desires no other witness but him; it is enough that he should know the good works it does, to reward them hereafter with everlasting happiness. Hence the truly charitable Christian is that universal man, who, like St. Paul, transforms himself into all shapes to be of service to all. His ordinary employment is to succour, to defend, and to serve his brethren; he overlooks their im-

perfections, and adapts himself to all their different humours. His is the comfort of the afflicted, the support of the feeble, the succour of the necessitous, the asylum of the persecuted, and the counsel of the ignorant. There is no weakness which he does not commiserate, no misery which does not excite his tenderness and compassion. Such are the characteristics of the amiable virtue of charity. You have heard the motives which are to induce you to it. The model of your love for your neighbour shall be the subject of the second point.

To love as we would willingly be loved, to love as we love ourselves, to love as Jesus Christ has loved us ; these rules are to be the model of that charity which we owe our neighbour. We are willing to be loved by all men ; we love ourselves sincerely ; the Son of God has loved us solidly. Our charity, then, to be perfect, must have these three qualities : It must be universal, sincere and solid. First, it must be universal, that is, it must take in all mankind. Our Blessed Saviour gives us to understand, in the parable of the charitable Samaritan, that all men, without exception or reserve, are our neighbour, whether friend or enemy, countryman or foreigner, rich or poor. The Almighty has given us, in himself an example of this extensive and universal charity ; his paternal providence procures the welfare of all created beings, and supplies the necessities of the most minute, the most abject creatures. He waters the land of the reprobate with as gentle showers, as that of the faithful Christian who is attached to his service. The universe subsists by his infinite power, and he showers down the gifts of nature on the unjust as well as on the just, Mat. c. v. It is thus Christian charity tenders its good offices to all, without exception, because it finds all inclosed in the heart of Jesus Christ. It embraces the whole universe, has as many relations, as many friends, as there are men on the face of the earth ; and as St. John Chrysostom speaks, exceeds in its affection to all, that of the most tender parent to his children. All men in general, notwithstanding the difference of their religion, or the contrariety of their humours, are the objects of its tenderness and compassion ; it excludes not the most imperfect nor the most vicious from a share in its affection, but commiserates their weakness and infirmity. Far from entertaining a bitter indiscreet zeal against them, or traducing their character, whilst it separates from them by way of precaution, it assists them with prayers, with good example, and interests itself in their favour at the throne of mercy. Charity is also sincere, like unto that love which we bear to ourselves, and which of all love is the most sincere, the most constant, the most durable, the most active, and the most extensive. Hence the *love of ourselves* is the model by which we are commanded to regulate the love we owe our neighbour. When I speak of *the love of ourselves* on this occasion, I do not mean that blind, inordi-

nate and criminal self-love, which is governed by passion, grounded on the inclinations of corrupt nature, and which moves us to gratify our sensuality, curiosity and pride, and to consult only our own ease, pleasure and interest in all things; but I mean that true and just love of ourselves which is directed by reason and religion.

The Scripture also gives us to understand, that we are to imitate that love and union which subsists between the members of the same body; for we are all one body and fellow-members in Christ, as the Apostle speaks, Rom. c. xii. v. 5. We have all different offices, functions and uses in this body, and have all mutually need of one another. Providence has wisely assigned us various employments and duties, which are necessary for the benefit of the whole body. Some are placed in a higher and in a more exalted rank, others in a lower and a more humble station; some are at the head, some at the feet, and all should rest satisfied with the station allotted to them without murmuring, or envying their fellow-members any advantage they may possess above them. There is no envy, no disagreement between the members of the same natural body, says St. Augustine. The feet do not envy the head, the eyes, or the hands; they do not despise or quarrel with each other, but are all solicitous for one another, and combine to give a mutual assistance; they all love each other, are in pain for one another, and are mutually careful one of the other, 1 Cor. c. xii. v. 24, 26. One member protects and defends another in danger. If the head be threatened, the eye discovers the danger; the hand is raised to prevent the blow, and the feet run away to escape it. If the foot happens to tread upon a thorn, the back stoops, the eye searches for it, the tongue complains and asks where it is, the hands are employed, and the fingers pull it out and deliver the suffering member from its torment. When one member is hurt all the rest are concerned, and ready to bring relief; and when it is cured and well, all the rest rejoice and are happy. Such is the love, such is the union, says St. Augustine, that ought to subsist amongst Christians, who are members of Christ's mystical body.

Our Blessed Saviour proposes another model of charity more sublime and more perfect. *I give you*, says he, Jo. c. xiii. v. 34: *a new commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.* By these words he undoubtedly demands of us a love for our neighbour, which has in view nothing less than the eternal salvation of his soul. Should I then assert, that to procure the eternal salvation of your husbands, of your wives, of your children and of your neighbours, you should sacrifice even life itself, were it necessary, I would tell you nothing but what St. John positively declares to be your duty. *We ought to lay down our lives for our brethren*, 1 Ep. c. iii. v. 16. But how could I think of preaching this doctrine at

present to those who, perhaps several times in the day, pray to God to damn the souls of their wives, children and domestics? How could I think of preaching it to those unhappy parents, whose houses resemble so many schools of the devil, and who are so far from instructing their children in the principles of religion, and they bring them up as so many victims which they sacrifice to hell? What success could I promise myself by recommending it to those unfortunate sinners of our days, who seem to have nothing more at heart than the ruin and damnation of each other, as they daily endeavour to corrupt and debauch so many innocent souls by their filthy discourses, wicked intrigues, and scandalous example? Notwithstanding, the principal duty of charity is to assist each other mutually in the grand affair of salvation; for if it obliges us to succour our brethren in their temporal wants, it imposes a far more strict obligation to assist them in their spiritual necessities, by giving them a brotherly admonition when we see them in danger of losing their souls, and by endeavouring to withdraw them from the road of perdition, and persuade them by good advice and example to the practice of virtue. O God of Charity inspire us with these Christian sentiments. Fill our hearts and inflame our souls, we beseech thee, with this celestial fire which thou didst come to kindle on earth, and grant us the great gift of final perseverance, that we may at our dying hour, through thy mercy, inherit those sacred mansions of bliss, where charity is to be the joy and constant occupation of thy Angels and Saints for a never-ending eternity. This is the blessing which I wish you all, my brethren, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

TENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

On the Festival of St. Nicholas of Tolentine.

Mirificavit Dominus Sanctum suum.—Psalm. lv. v. 4.

The Lord has rendered his Saint wonderful.—Psalm. lx. v. 4.

WHILST we admire the wonders of grace and mercy, which God has displayed in favour of his Saints, we are strongly moved to return him thanks for the large profusion of the heavenly blessings and gifts he conferred on them, and to praise and magnify his adorable goodness in them, as the Royal Prophet recommends, Ps. cl, saying, *Praise ye the Lord in his Saints.* In taking a view of their lives we learn the most

sublime lessons of Christian morality, and we see the most perfect maxims of the Gospel reduced to practice. By considering the examples they have left us, and by contemplating the eternal bliss which they now enjoy in the kingdom of Heaven, we are excited to a fervent imitation of the virtues which they practised here on earth, in hopes of partaking hereafter of their reward, and of being made one day companions of their glory. Hence it is that the Holy Catholic Church solemnizes so many festivals in the course of the year, in memory and in honour of those great servants of God, who have been elevated by divine grace to an eminent degree of sanctity and perfection, and who are now companions of the blessed Angels in Heaven, and Co-heirs with Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind, the King of the Saints, and the Source of all sanctity and glory. It is in his precious blood the Saints have *washed their robes*, as the Scripture expresses it, and it is from him they derive all their purity, whiteness and lustre. He is the author of all their good; their graces are his gifts and streams from his fountain, and our addresses to them are only petitions for the assistance of their prayers to God, whom we honour, praise and glorify in them and through them, as often as we invoke their intercession, sound their praises and celebrate their festivals.

It is in order to inspire you with the like religious sentiments; that I come this day to announce the eulogium of St. Nicholas of Tolentine, and to shew you that God, who, as the Prophet says, Ps. lxxvii. *is wonderful in his Saints*, enriched his soul with such extraordinary graces, and rendered him so conspicuous for his eminent virtues and illustrious miracles, that he may be justly stiled a prodigy of divine grace. His love for God was without measure; his charity towards his neighbour was unlimited; his zeal for the conversion of sinners was indefatigable; his humility, his patience and his piety were truly admirable; his spirit of prayer, of penance, of self-denial and mortification, was almost incredible. To delineate all his perfections, and describe all his shining virtues, would be a task sufficient to swell a large volume. The matter is too copious to be comprised within the limits of a short discourse; wherefore, to proceed with all the brevity that so extensive a subject will admit of, and so shew you how wonderful the Lord has vouchsafed to render him, both for the sanctity of his life and the splendour of his miracles, I shall confine myself to the two following propositions. St. Nicholas of Tolentine has adorned the Catholic Church by the wonderful lustre of his virtues. This is the subject of the first point. St. Nicholas of Tolentine has adorned the Catholic Church by the wonderful lustre and number of his miracles. This is the subject of the second point. Let us previously implore the divine assistance through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, *Ave Maria*.

It is an undoubted maxim of Christian morality that we are all bound to aspire to perfection, and to endeavour to be holy and without blemish in the sight of God during the course of our mortal pilgrimage here below on earth. *Be holy, because I the Lord your God am holy*, says the sacred Scripture, Levit. c. xii. and again, Mat. c. v. *Be you perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*. It is for this reason that St. Paul appropriates the name of *Saints* to all Christians, as if it were the same thing to be a Christian and to be a Saint. For the same reason St. Peter, 1 Ep. c. ii. v. 9. calls all the faithful a *chosen generation*, a *kingly priesthood*, an *holy nation*, a *purchased people*, which plainly shews, that in quality of Christians and disciples of Christ, we contract a special obligation by the solemn covenant and vows of our baptism, to *serve God in holiness and justice all the days of our life*, as the Gospel says, Luke, c. i. St. Nicholas of Tolentine, whose glorious memory we now solemnize, was perfectly acquainted with these truths; he was charmed with the sacred maxims of the Gospel, and therefore, he placed all his felicity in reducing them to practice. He commenced his career in so amazing a manner, that he discovered at the very dawn of life, and at the first twilight of reason, some sparkles of that divine light which was one day to blaze conspicuous in him. His very birth was stupendous and miraculous, and was immediately preceded and followed by manifest presages of his future sanctity. The history of the birth of the Prophet Samuel was perfectly renewed in his nativity: for, like unto him, Nicholas was a child of prayers, bestowed to the world after many repeated vows and supplications to Heaven; but I pass over these particulars, in order to make you admire the first instance of his extraordinary piety, which manifested itself at the age of seven years, by a fast of three days in the week, which he exactly observed ever after during the whole course of his life. This early zeal for mortification was a proof of the love he had for Jesus Christ, and of his ardent desire to carry the cross of his Divine Master, and to imprint on his flesh a just resemblance of that Man of Sorrows. His piety did not wait to be ripened by the maturity of years, but blossomed out at a time when the generality of children seem only capable and fond of childish amusements and plays. As soon as reason began first to glimmer, he anticipated the years of his perfect understanding, and became a rigorous penitent before he knew what sin was. He loved God with his whole soul, and he presented his entire heart to him without division or reserve. Like young Tobias, he despised the toys, and shunned the frivolous diversions of other children of his age; and whilst they began to corrupt by degrees, and offered their first sacrifices to the golden calves of Jeroboam, Nicholas went daily to the temple of the living God, in order to pour out his soul before him in the holy exercises of religion. It was his delight, his joy, and his

glory, to lie prostrate at the foot of the altar of Jesus Christ, to lift up his tender hands to Heaven, to honour and invoke God's holy name, and to vow eternal obedience and homage to his infinite power. Such were the first essays of his childhood. In other persons these things are generally the fruits of several years co-operation with divine grace; but where others usually finish, Nicholas began his journey of life. O with what an eye of complacency did the Almighty behold these first transports, emotions and sacrifices of his loving heart! After so touching an example of youthful piety, what shall we say of those who, instead of giving God the first place in their hearts, and paying him the just tribute of love as soon as they are capable hereof, go astray in the very beginning of their career, and seem to reserve only the dregs of old age, and the shattered, languishing remains of a debauched life for their great Creator? What judgment shall we form of those Christians, who are neither afraid nor ashamed to commit so many irreverences at the foot of the altar, who speak to God at their prayers with as much carelessness and distraction as if they intended to affront him, who frequent the house of God more out of custom, vanity and ostentation, than out of a true and sincere devotion; in fine, whose exterior modesty and strained behaviour in the Chapel proclaim them so many models of piety, but whose impatience, peevishness, ill temper and disorderly conduct at home in their family, pronounce them victims of self-love and slaves of Satan? The piety of young Nicholas is an eternal reproach to them; it is also a lesson sufficient to confound many vicious and undisciplined children of our days, who scarce receive the spirit of God but they stifle it, and unhappily make a shipwreck of their baptismal innocence before they rightly know its inestimable value, plunging into unnatural and detestable vices which corrupt their hearts, infect their minds, defile their bodies, destroy charity, extinguish sanctifying grace in their souls, and often prove the first fatal step to their eternal reprobation. This is a misfortune truly deplorable, and in a great measure to be attributed to the misconduct of their parents, who are so apt to pervert them by their own scandalous example, and to bring them up in such a manner as fits them rather for the drudgery of Belial, than for the service of Jesus Christ. Far from instilling principles of religion into the souls of their young children, and making them carry the sweet yoke of the Lord from their infancy; far from giving them an early tincture of piety, and presenting them in due time in the temple of God, to be nourished and fortified by the graces of the holy sacraments, they are only solicitous to fashion them to the customs and manners of the world, for which end they often expose their innocence in public places and dangerous assemblies, where they are soon initiated in the dreadful mysteries of flesh and blood. The parents of young Nicholas

perused a different line of conduct; their chief study and care was to shape and mould him to virtue, to cultivate the happy dispositions Heaven had blessed him with, and to cherish the seeds of piety which sprung from the grace of his baptism? And what was the consequence? The older he grew the more he advanced in grace and true wisdom, not unlike the sun, which gradually acquires more strength, and shines with greater beauty and lustre the nearer it approaches the meridian. But why should I delay so long in examining the childhood of a saint, whose whole life was one continued series of virtue? No sooner had he heard a preacher of the order of St. Augustine declaiming zealously against the vanities of the world, but he obeyed with promptitude the voice of grace and the call of Heaven, by embracing a religious state of life in the Augustinian convent of Tolentine in Italy. The world offered him its riches, its pleasures, its honours; but he nobly despised them as empty shadows of felicity, and glittering phantoms of glory. He renounced them all for the love of Jesus Christ, to whom he offered a most perfect holocaust of his soul, his body, and of all the external goods of fortune he possessed or was entitled to on earth. O may the day on which Heaven enriched the order of St. Augustine with so valuable a treasure be marked as happy for returning ages!

Here it is, my brethren, that I will prescribe no bounds to your thoughts. Represent to yourselves whatever the most eminent penitents have inflicted on their bodies, your idea will fall short of what Nicholas performed. It is almost incredible what a surprising progress he made in the school of perfection after his religious profession and promotion to holy orders. To imitate the poverty of his Divine Redeemer the more perfectly, the only patrimony that he coveted, the only legacy he thirsted after, was the Cross of Jesus Christ; the only dwelling place he chose was a narrow cell, where his most valuable furniture was a crucifix, a cold flag to place his bare knees on when he went to prayer, and another to support his naked elbows; an hair shirt to wear under his habit, and an iron chain to surround his loins and to discipline his chaste and innocent body, till he left it streaming in a gore of blood. His fast was almost continual; the approved history of his life informs us that his usual diet, three or four days in the week, for the space of thirty years, was bread and water; a few seasoned roots and herbs were his choicest entertainment. His vigilance was such that he seemed divorced from sleep, and frequently spent whole nights in prayer and contemplation without closing his eyes. When he allowed his wearied and emaciated body a little rest, the bare ground, the cold earth, or the naked boards served him for a bed, and a hard stone for a pillow. Whilst he thus sacrificed his body to God by the rigours and austerities of penance, his soul constantly breathed

the sweet incense and perfume of ardent prayer. Like unto a glass, which, being penetrated with the rays of the sun, reflects its brightness, so Nicholas, penetrated with the rays of eternal justice, and filled with the fire of divine love, cast about him bright flames of sanctity; devotion sparkled in his eyes, meekness and modesty shone in his countenance, and spread a lustre that instructed and edified; his compassion for the poor was so great, that he thought it no unworthy employment to beg for them and plead their cause before the rich, whom he exhorted to expend their superfluities in relieving the distressed members of Christ, rather than squander them in extravagancies to support pride and worldly vanities, as frequently happens. His charity was not confined to the body, but laboured chiefly for the more noble part, to gain souls over to Jesus Christ, being his crown and his joy. There was no work of mercy, spiritual or temporal, but what he cheerfully performed. How often has he wept for hardened sinners who would not weep for themselves? What prayers did he offer for their amendment? What labours and fatigues did he undergo for their conversion? He echoed in their ears the doctrine of a crucified Jesus, with a noble and eloquent simplicity, that was calculated to mollify their hearts and draw penitential tears from their eyes, rather than praises or applauses from their mouths. Nay, his sanctified life, of itself, was a most excellent sermon, whereby he reclaimed numbers of sinners, and persuaded them to rise out of the mire of their iniquities, and to return to the Father of Mercies. He knew no other business he had on earth but to accomplish the will of his heavenly Father, and promote his honour and glory both by word and example; he, therefore, spent the best part of sixty years in these and the like holy exercises, spreading the glittering rays of his sanctity on every side, and adorning the Catholic Church by the lustre of his virtues, until it pleased the Almighty to disengage his pious soul from the prison of his mortal body and transfer it to the mansions of bliss, to shine there like a star before his throne for perpetual eternities. Hence it is customary to represent him with a star on his breast, a crucifix in one hand, and a white lily in the other; the lily denoting his angelic purity, and the crucifix signifying his penitential austerities and mortifications.

Contemplate yourselves now, my brethren, in this bright mirror of sanctity, which I have hitherto held out to your view; consider attentively whether or no you walk in the path which conducted Nicholas to everlasting bliss. See if you tread in the steps which he has traced out to you by his example. Be assured you will find yourselves wofully mistaken in the end, if you expect to go to Heaven by following the crowd, and marching on boldly in the broad, pleasant road, and the flowery paths of vice; for there is but one Gospel for us all, but one Redeemer, and but one Heaven, and no other

road can lead you to it but the road of the cross. You must contend to enter in with the small number of the elect at the narrow gate of penance and mortification; for *the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence*, as our Saviour says, Mat. c. xi. v. 12. and it is not to be carried but by curbing and counteracting the vicious inclinations of corrupt nature. I do not pretend, however, that you are bound to live up to the rigour of the wonderful austerities of St. Nicholas, because they are not proportioned to every one's strength, nor suitable to every condition; but, to be crowned with him in glory, you must follow his example by an imitation of those virtues which are within your reach, and centered in the sphere of your duty; for it is certain that a life which is a flat contradiction to his life, and the very reverse of it, neither has the Gospel for its pattern, nor will be able hereafter to stand the test of it on the terrible day of judgment. O what will then become of those half Christians, who, intent only on the gratification of their senses, let loose the reins to their disorderly passions, and spend their days in a continual circle of criminal pleasures, pampering, indulging, and idolizing their corruptible bodies, without taking any pains to decorate their immortal souls with the real ornaments of virtue? What will become of those nominal Catholics who, by their detestable habits of drunkenness, cursing, swearing and blaspheming, are a scandal to the Church, a reproach to religion, a dishonour and disgrace to Christianity? They believe indeed like saints, but alas! many of them live worse than Turks, in an open violation of the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church. But let us at present draw a veil over such deplorable scandals, and take a more pleasing view of St. Nicholas of Tolentine, who not only adorned the Catholic Church by the sanctity of his life as you have already heard, but likewise by the splendour of his miracles, as I promised to shew you in the second point.

As sanctity is one of the distinguishing characters of the true Church of Christ, so in like manner the gift of miracles is another character and mark, whereby the true Church and religion of Christ is distinguished and discerned from all other sects and religions on earth. It is well known that all the illustrious saints who have flourished in different nations these seventeen hundred years past, have lived and died in the bosom of the Catholic Church, which plainly shews that she must be the true Church of God and the real spouse of Jesus Christ, since she has always been the Church of the Saints, and the mother and fertile nursery of the children of God. It is no less evident, and the world must acknowledge it, that her religion has been founded, confirmed and propagated by miracles, which was one of the motives that attracted that great luminary, St. Augustine, to her communion. This holy doctor assures us, in his Book of the City of God, that he was himself an eye-wit-

ness to various miracles wrought in the Catholic Church by means of the relics of saints. Hence he urges the following dilemma against the unbelievers of his own days: The Catholic religion either was confirmed by miracles or it was not; if by miracles, then it is a divine religion, and has God for its author, because God being essentially true, could not set his hand and seal to a lie, or authorize error by real miracles. If you deny that it was confirmed by miracles, you still prove it to be a divine religion, and you acknowledge a greater miracle than you deny; for to convert the world to the Catholic religion without a miracle, would be the greatest and most divine of all miracles; so that whatever way you consider its establishment, you must admit its veracity, and confess that it has the divine authority stamped upon it in the clearest characters. Unbelievers, in general, explode and ridicule miracles, because they were never vested with such power, nor favoured with the like prerogative; but to deny the miracles which have been wrought in confirmation of the truth of the Catholic religion, is not only to discredit the most authentic records and annals of all nations and ages, but also to falsify the Scriptures, to contradict the word of God, and to give the lie openly to Jesus Christ, who positively assures us, John, c. xiv. that those who would believe in him should work greater miracles than he himself had wrought; and again, Mark, c. xvi. that they should cast out devils, and heal all kind of disorders in his name. Moses and the Prophets in the Old Testament were gifted with the like power of working various miracles, which served as credentials to prove the legality of their mission, and to shew that they did not come of their own accord without being sent, like the false Prophets, of whom the Prophet Jeremy complains in c. xxiii. The apostles also proved their mission by a multitude of miracles, and Christ himself, though his heavenly Father and the Prophets bore testimony of him, declared to the Jews that they would not have sinned in not receiving him, if he had not done such works among them as no one else had done, John, c. xv. v. 24. So necessary has it been always judged for those who came to found a new religion, or to preach up any novelty in faith and morals, to prove their doctrine by miracles, in order to shew that it was not an human invention, nor the idle production of their own brain, but a divine revelation which had God himself for its author, and was stamped with his divine approbation. It was for this reason, that in all ages such as have set up for new lights, sent immediately from God, or have pretended to an extraordinary mission, and taken upon themselves to commence preachers and fabricators of new-fangled systems of religion, were justly challenged to produce their patents and credentials, stamped with the broad seal of Heaven and ratified by some evident miracle, which, if they were not able to do, they were always held by the faithful in no other light than that of usurpers, cheats and impostors, prompted

on by the father of lies, as was the case of the Prophets of Baal, in the famous contest between them and the Prophet Elias, mentioned in the 3d Book of Kings, c. xviii. And really God, who is the sovereign wisdom and the sovereign justice, does not expect that we should receive or give credit to any such new gossellers upon their own bare word or assertion; otherwise we should be constantly exposed to the danger of being led astray by false Prophets, who never fail to cry out, *The Lord, The Lord*, though the Lord never sent them. Christ himself charges us to beware of such preachers and teachers, as wolves that come in sheep's clothing; and the Apostle goes so far as to say, that though an Angel should come from Heaven to preach up a new Gospel, we are to look upon him as an anathema, Galat. c. i. v. 8.

Among the many saints of the New Testament, to whom the Almighty has been pleased to communicate the power of working miracles, St. Nicholas of Tolentine obtains one of the first places; for, according to the declaration of Eugenius IV. who canonized him in the year 1446, *No Saint since the days of the Apostles, ever adorned or confirmed the Church of God with more miracles than Nicholas of Tolentine*. He therefore stiled him *The Patron of the Church*, and honoured him with the title of *Thaumaturgus*, by excellency, that is to say, *The Worker of Miracles*. The bull of his canonization alone contains upwards of three hundred renowned miracles, strictly examined, well attested, and juridically proved by the testimonies of three hundred and seventy-one witnesses, amongst whom are reckoned no less than five-and-twenty persons who had been raised to life by his intercession. As to the wonderful effects that are attributed to the blood of St. Nicholas, and to the small breads which he was accustomed in his life-time to give to the sick as a remedy for various distempers, I shall, for brevity's sake, pass them over in silence. Let the four elements, and the four parts of the earth to which the fame and sanctity of his miracles reached in a short time, so as to induce several cities to choose him for their patron and protector under God, speak now for me, and relate what they have often beheld with astonishment. However, to disabuse those who seem to glory in ridiculing and making a jest of such matters, I must beg leave to observe, that the Almighty has been frequently pleased to unite grandeur with simplicity, and to make choice of things, mean and contemptible in themselves, in order to demonstrate his power and magnificence, goodness and mercy. We read in the Old Testament, that he made choice of the rod of Moses to fill all Egypt with prodigies, and of the mantle of Elias to divide the waters of the River Jordan, and of the bones of Elisæus to raise a dead man to life, and of the brazen serpent in the desert, to work a great number of miraculous cures. The New Testament informs us also, that the Almighty had made use of the shadow of St. Peter to heal all kind of disorders, and of

the handkerchiefs and aprons which had touched the body of St. Paul, to banish spirits, and of a little clay moistened with spittle, to restore sight to a blind man. If all this be true, as no Christian can deny, why should it be deemed ridiculous to give human credit to the authentic records of different nations, and to the united testimonies of numberless learned, pious and credible witnesses and writers all over Christendom? Why should it be counted absurd to believe piously, upon so respectable an authority, that the Almighty, *whose arm is not shortened*, has been pleased to shew the greatness of his goodness, mercy and power in his faithful servant, Nicholas of Tolentine, in order to rouse sinners from their lethargy, and encourage them to be more submissive and attentive to his sacred laws? *By rendering his saint so wonderful and so conspicuous*, both for the lustre of his virtues and the splendor of his miracles, the Lord manifested to the world the truth and divine origin of the Catholic faith and religion which he professed, enriched the Church with a new ornament, and furnished all succeeding ages with an illustrious model of piety, penance and mortification.

O Almighty and Eternal God, we thank, praise, and glorify thee for all the wonders of thy grace, mercy and power, which thy adorable goodness hast been pleased to display in favour of thy Saints. Grant that by following their example we may find acceptance in thy sight, and after having experinced the wonderful effects of thy tender mercies in this life, we may partake of thy eternal glory in the next. Which is the blessing, my brethren, that I sincerely wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Nature of Indulgences and Jubilees.

Confide, fili, remittuntur tibi peccata.—Mat. c. ix. v. 2.

Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee.—Mat. c. ix. v. 2.

WE do not find that the power of remitting sin was ever conferred on any human creature before the Son of God became man. This signal blessing was reserved for the children of God under the new Law of Grace. Christ our Lord, as man, being at the same time true God, was the first who received this power from his heavenly Father, and the Scripture informs us that he exercised it on several occasions. We

read in the Gospel of this day, that he wrought an illustrious miracle to convince the incredulous Jews *that he had power on earth to forgive sins*. The Scribes and Pharisees, a set of carping hypocrites, who made it their constant practice to censure his doctrine, to misconstrue his words, and to traduce his most innocent actions, were scandalized, and charged him in their own hearts with blasphemy, on hearing him say to a man who had been brought to him, *lying on a bed, and ill of the palsy, Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee*. Wherefore our Divine Redeemer, knowing their thoughts, and willing to confirm his words and doctrine, replied with his usual meekness and charity, *Which is it easier to say, thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, rise up and walk? But that you may know the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, I say to thee*, addressing himself then to the sick man, *Rise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house*, which the sick man accordingly did in an instant, to the great astonishment of the crowd of the people who were eye-witnesses hereof, and who began immediately to *glorify God for having given such power to men*.

It is true, God alone has power *of himself* to forgive sins; but Christ, who is both God and man, could and did communicate this power of remitting sins, *in his name*, and *by his authority*, to his Apostles and their lawful successors, as *his ministers and instruments*. (See Sermon on Low Sunday, Vol. I. p. 260.) It is in virtue of this power and commission that the pastors of the Church have been accustomed, ever since the earliest years of Christianity, to exercise a spiritual and judiciary authority in the sacred tribunal of penance, and not only to absolve the faithful from the guilt of their sins upon a sincere repentance, but likewise to grant them indulgences occasionally, when a just cause required it, for the purpose of releasing them from the debt of temporal punishment, which generally remains to be discharged, either in this life or in the next, even after the sins themselves are forgiven, both as to the guilt and the eternal punishment due to them in hell. This practice, and the doctrine of absolution, when dispassionately considered, fairly represented, and rightly understood, far from being any way derogatory or injurious to the honour of God, will be found to redound very much to it, and to be a great curb to sin. Instead of promoting sin, or being an encouragement to a sinner, to persevere in iniquity upon the confidence of being absolved whenever he pleases, nothing contributes more to the real conversion of sinners, as nothing lays corrupt nature under so many severe restraints, nothing subjects it to more humiliating or more penal conditions, nothing encourages the practice of works of piety and religion, charity and penance more effectually. To imagine, then, that by an absolution, or by an indulgence, is meant a leave or licence to commit sin, or at least a pardon

previously granted for future sins, is a notion that justly deserves the abhorrence of every Christian, and that is diametrically opposite to the belief of the Catholic Church, which teaches us that no authority upon earth can give previous leave to commit the least venial sin, or can absolve any sinner whatsoever without a true repentance and a firm purpose of amendment. To elucidate this matter, and to excite you to a due esteem for indulgences, is the design of the following discourse. In the first point I will lay before you the nature and utility of indulgences and jubilees, and in the second, the conditions that are necessary to gain the benefit of them. Let us, before we proceed, devoutly implore the assistance of the Divine Spirit, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, greeting her in the words of the Archangel Gabriel, *Ave Maria*.

Were I to speak here to a people of a different religious persuasion, who reject the authority of the Church, and deny it a power of granting indulgences, I would not despair of being able to prove this orthodox truth out of the written word of God, which is the only authority they pretend to abide by ; but glory be to God, no one here doubts of the power imparted by Christ to his Church. No confusion of Babel, no wall of separation divides us in this sacred place ; we all sing the same hymn of the peaceful Sion, and we are all but *one sheepfold under one pastor*. We all believe that Jesus Christ faithfully fulfilled the promise which he made first to St. Peter, saying, *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven : Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven ; whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven*, Mat. c. xvi. v. 19. and again, to all his Apostles, *Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven*, Mat. c. xviii. v. 18. These promises, which our Lord made without any exception, limitation or reservation whatever, clearly imply a power of loosing and releasing all such bonds as might otherwise hinder or retard the entrance of a soul into the kingdom of Heaven, *into which*, as the Scripture assures us, *nothing that is sullied or defiled will be admitted*, Apoc. c. xxi. Hence it is that the power of granting indulgences has been made use of in the Church at all times, and in all ages, since the purest and earliest years of Christianity, as the Council of Trent observes. St. Paul himself, at the request of the faithful of Corinth, granted an indulgence to the incestuous man whom he had excommunicated and put under penance, 1 Cor. c. v. for when he understood that this man had given evident proofs of his real contrition and sincere conversion, the Apostle treated him with the greatest indulgence, and not only freed him from the excommunication he had inflicted, but also from all guilt, and remitted to him, both before God and man, the remainder of

the punishment which he was to have suffered. This pardon St. Paul granted *in the person of Christ*, that is, by the power and authority he had received from Christ, and as if Christ himself, really present, had granted it, least perhaps the Corinthian should be overwhelmed *with too much sorrow*, and fall into pusillanimity and despair, 2 Cor. c. ii. v. 7, 10. Tertullian, who flourished in the second century, testifies, lib. de pud. c. ult. that the bishops and pastors of the primitive Church were accustomed, in the days of persecution, to grant indulgences to repenting sinners, and to remit the penalties due to their crimes, when they produced letters of attestation from imprisoned and tortured martyrs, who sealed their faith with the effusion of their blood. St. Cyprian also informs us. Ep. ix. 10, 13, and 24. and the bishops frequently hastened the grace of absolution, and discharged penitents at the request of the holy martyrs, from the whole or from part of the penitential works enjoined them, particularly in case of sickness, or when their spiritual good required it, and too great a rigour was likely to prejudice their souls. We read likewise in c. xii. of the first General Council of Nice, and in other particular Councils, that bishops were empowered to abridge the time and the degrees of the canonical humiliations and penances then in force, in favour of such penitents as performed them with greatest fervor. Whenever they were moved by the tears and repentance of sinners to do this, it was called an *indulgence* of so many years as the penance enjoined by the canons for their different sins should otherwise have lasted, because it was the effect of an indulgence or compassion of the Church towards her children. For some sins of public notoriety seven years public penance was enjoined; for others eleven, fifteen, or more years, in proportion to the enormity of the crimes. During this time the penitents fasted four quarantines in the year, at least three days a week on bread and water; they stood at the Church gate upon Sundays and Holy-days, clothed in a penitential habit, and were not admitted, unless for just and pressing reasons, to the sacraments, until their years of penance were finished. This was the ancient rigorous discipline of the Church for many ages, and according to it, some sinners must have been liable to a much greater number of years of penance, corresponding to their sins, than they could be expected to live, in order to fulfil it, so that any extraordinary grants of indulgences which might, perhaps, have been made in favour of such penitents, are to be understood as designed to release them from the extraordinary debt of temporal punishment they had incurred by their sins, according to the canons then in force. Indulgences, however, were not so frequent then, nor so necessary as they are at present, when a general depravity seems to have taken possession of the heart of man. The spirit of penance was then every where visible

from the ardour alone of imitating Jesus Christ, the perfect model of all Christians; the faithful wishing to tread in the footsteps of their crucified Redeemer, devoted their lives to the love of the cross, the desire of martyrdom, and the most painful austerities and exercises of penance and mortification. They endeavoured, in general, with the aid of divine grace, to satisfy for the offences which the weakness of human nature had caused them sometimes to fall into without having recourse to the spiritual treasures of the Church. When this primitive zeal became cold, and the spirit of penance relaxed, the Church judged it expedient to moderate the severity of her ancient discipline, in condescension to the weakness of her children, and to render the usage of indulgences more frequent in these latter ages. Her intention, however, is not to diminish the zeal of the faithful thereby, nor to exempt or exonerate them from doing penance for their sins, but on the contrary to animate them with the spirit of penance, and inspire them with a more ardent desire of atoning for their sins by their own voluntary satisfactions, and by devoutly performing the penitential works which are usually enjoined and prescribed as a condition necessary for the obtaining of an indulgence. Hence the Council of Trent teaches, that the obligation of doing penance for sin is so indispensable a duty, that *the whole life of a Christian ought to be a continual practice of penance*. Sin is at present no less offensive to Almighty God than it formerly was, and consequently no less punishment is due to it now than in the primitive ages, since the divine justice is still unchangeably the same. Nay, the crimes of the generality of modern Christians are more grievous and more numerous than the crimes of the primitive Christians, and of course their penance and satisfaction should be proportionably greater, according to this rule laid down by God himself: *The number of stripes shall be according to the greatness of the offence*. Deut. c. xxv. v. 7. It is true, when sinners truly repent, God in his great mercy is pleased to remit their sins both as to the guilt and eternal punishment due in hell to every mortal sin; but his divine justice commonly substitutes a temporal punishment in the place of the eternal punishment, as appears evidently from several illustrious examples recorded in Holy Writ. Adam himself, though the Lord pardoned him his sin, was, in punishment thereof, turned out of the earthly Paradise, and condemned to labour during life, and his posterity became subject to sickness, to death, and to a long train of miseries and calamities in consequence of his disobedience. We read also, in c. xii. of the Book of Numbers, that the sister of Moses was subjected to seven days penance, though her sin had been forgiven. In like manner, the Israelites were pardoned their sins through the intercession of Moses, and yet in punishment of their idolatry and murmurs, they were condemned to wander forty years in the desert,

and debarred from entering the Land of Promise, Numb. c. xiv. The prayers of Manasses were heard, and his sins were forgiven, yet he was afterwards temporarily punished, and God would by no means remit the punishment. King David was assured by the Prophet Nathan that the Lord *had put away his sin*; yet he was punished with the death of his child, the dishonour of his house, dissensions in his family, and several other judgments which were inflicted on him, Samuel, c. ii. v. 12. A sin of pride, which he afterwards committed, was pardoned, and yet it was punished with a plague of three days, which carried off seventy thousand of his subjects, 2 Kings, c. 24. Here we plainly see the pardon of sin separated from the pardon of the punishment, and the justice of God reserving a right to inflict a temporal punishment on those who have transgressed his sacred Laws. In the sacrament of Baptism the case is different; we are then treated with unbounded mercy, and the merits of Christ are applied to our souls, and accepted in their full extent in satisfaction for our sins; for though we are not thereby freed from all the infirmities occasioned by original sin, the Almighty, being willing to permit them to remain in order to try our fidelity, to exercise our virtue, to disengage our affections from the world, and to humble our pride at the thoughts of our own weakness, yet by the grace of baptism we receive a full and perfect remission of all past sins committed before it, and we are delivered from all the punishment, both eternal and temporal, due to them; but we are not received again into favour upon such easy terms after baptism as before it, the sins committed after baptism implying a base ingratitude, special malice, and barefaced contempt of the goodness and bounty of God. Justice and mercy going then together, God is moved, through the merits of Christ to grant us mercy upon a sincere repentance, and to forgive us our sins, both as to the guilt and the eternal punishment due to them; but his justice is pleased to change a greater punishment into a less, and requires to be satisfied by penitential works and temporal chastisements for the abuse of his mercy. This is not only conformable to the rules of strict justice, but also attended with signal advantages to our souls, and highly conducive to our salvation; for it serves to give us a true sense of the grievousness of sins committed after baptism, and of the great injury thereby done to the infinite majesty of God; it keeps us in a salutary fear, makes us more cautious and careful, and deters us from future relapses; it checks our vicious inclinations, strikes at the root of our spiritual disorders, appeases the wrath and disarms the divine justice, and renders us more faithful in the performance of our religious duties, and more fervent in the practice of Christian virtues. If we were too easily reconciled after great crimes, and too speedily freed from the bonds of justice, we would be apt to think slightly of them, to abuse the facility of pardon, and to abandon ourselves to a temera-

rious confidence, according to the remark of St. Augustine, *Parva putaretur culpa, si cum illâ finiretur et pœna.*

It is to expiate and satisfy for this debt of temporal punishment, due to the divine justice on account of past forgiven sins, that we are subjected to some painful and laborious works of penance in the sacred tribunal, and that indulgences are granted to the faithful. The direct and immediate effect of an indulgence, therefore, is not to pardon or remit sin, for it supposes sin already forgiven, both as to guilt and the eternal punishment, either by the sacrament of penance, or by a perfect contrition, which includes a desire of the sacrament. By an indulgence is only meant a relaxation or remission of the debt of temporal punishment which remains to be discharged, and atoned for either in this world or in purgatory, *until the last farthing is paid*, as the Gospel expresses it, Mat. c. xxv. the sinner's repentance being seldom so perfect as to release him entirely from it. Some indulgences are *partial*, some *plenary*, some are confined to particular Churches or places, and granted on solemn festivals and days of devotion; herein they differ from *Jubilees*, which are more rare, more solemn, more general, accompanied with greater privileges, and extended to the universal church. They all derive their virtue and value from the price of the blood of Jesus Christ, as rivulets derive from their fountain head, and as the moon borrows its light from the sun; in him we have a most plentiful redemption, and an inexhaustible treasure to make up for all our deficiencies, to supply all our wants, and to relieve all our necessities. His merits and satisfactions are of infinite value, and the source of all our good; they elevate our penitential works to the value they have, our works being no otherwise valuable and satisfactory than as joined to his satisfactions; for it is through him alone we can expect to find a grateful acceptance in the sight of God. What we call *satisfaction* with the primitive Church, is nothing but the application of his satisfactions; nothing is wanting to them on his part, but something is wanting on our part, in order to have the fruits and merits of his passion and death applied and communicated to our souls; for he did not intend to patronise indolence, encourage sloth, or discharge us from the obligation of satisfying his offended justice as far as we are able. On the contrary, he requires us to join the small mite of our poor endeavours with his superabundant satisfactions, that we may partake of the benefit of them. This made St. Paul say, Coloss. c. i. v. 24. that *he accomplished and fulfilled in himself what was behind-hand and wanting to the passion of Christ*, that is, to the application of his infinite merits. As to the satisfactions and merits of the saints, since they have their value from him, and through him are accepted by his eternal Father, they were also applicable to the faithful upon earth; for by *the communion* which the members of his mystical body have one with another, they reciprocally receive help from each other, and are enabled

to say with the Royal Prophet, Ps. cxviii. *I partake, O my God, of all the good works of those who fear thee.* The Scripture informs us, that God spared Loth on account of the faith of Abraham; he also spared the Israelites on account of Moses, and was willing to spare the Sodomites if ten just men had been found amongst them. But what are the conditions required to gain an indulgence?

One of the most essential conditions required for gaining the benefit of a plenary indulgence, is to be in the state of grace. It is in vain to expect that the punishment due to sin will be forgiven whilst the guilt or affection of it remains in the soul; and the guilt of it will remain in the soul until it is remitted and washed away by the grace of Jesus Christ, who has merited for us the pardon of our sins, and repeatedly promised it to those who sincerely repent, and approach the throne of mercy with proper dispositions. To gain the full effect of a plenary indulgence, and to be released from the whole punishment due upon account of past sins, we must not only be free from the guilt and affection of mortal sin, but also from the guilt and affection of venial sin. This should excite the faithful to redouble their fervour, and to dispose themselves in the best manner they are able for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, if they wish to obtain the benefit of a plenary indulgence. Indulgences, particularly plenary indulgences and jubilees, which are the most signal of all indulgences, are favours granted only to the just, and friends of God, who apply devoutly for them. They are merciful dispensations and releases, designed for the succour and relief of the indigent, to supply their wants out of the treasure of the Church, by offering to God an equivalent for the debt of temporal punishment, that the infirmity of human nature and their own insufficiency render them liable to. Besides the various indulgences that may be gained on the principal solemnities and festivals which occur in the course of the year, the plenary indulgence, called the *Jubilee*, is granted every twenty-fifth year, and upon some other extraordinary occasions to all the faithful, who, being truly penitent, approach the holy sacrament worthily, and duly comply with the other conditions of fasting, alms-deeds, and devout prayers, which are then usually prescribed. The intention of the Church herein is to renew the spirit of fervour, piety and charity among the faithful, to promote the practice of all kind of good works, to rouse the lukewarm, and bring back the strayed sheep from their evil ways. She then calls most pressinglly on all sinners, and most zealously invites them to return, like the prodigal son, to their heavenly Father with their whole heart, that they may be reinstated in their deserted rights, and restored to their paternal inheritance, which they unhappily forfeited. She solicits them to unite with the whole body of the faithful all over the world, in offering a holy violence to Heaven by the public prayers and penitential works which are generally per-

formed on the occasion. This solemn indulgence is justly distinguished by the name of *Jubilee*, a word that signifies *joy and exultation*, because the effects of it are the conversions of multitudes of sinners, which gives joy to the Angels in Heaven ; the multiplying of all sorts of good works, which gives edification to all Christendom ; and the spiritual joy, inward peace, and consolation, which are sensibly felt in the souls of those who worthily partake of it. The year that this great act of grace is extended to all the faithful, is called the *Holy and Jubilee year*, from the resemblance it bears with the *Jubilee year* in the old Law, the origin and institution of which we read, Levit. xxv. and xxvii. It was a year of remission and indulgence for the people of God. As soon as it was announced with trumpets by the Priests to the children of Israel, all bondsmen and slaves were set at liberty, prisoners were released, debtors were discharged, and every one returned to his former possessions. It is of it that the Prophet Isaias speaks, c. lxi. where he says, that *The Lord sent him to preach indulgence, to deliver captives, to discharge debtors, and to heal the wounds of the sick*. The ancient Jubilee was ordered to be celebrated every fiftieth year, and that whole year was sanctified in the same manner that the Jews sanctified their weekly Sabbath, by refraining from servile works ; and to prevent the people from suffering any hardships on account of so long a Sabbath, Divine Providence took care to bless the labour of the preceding year in such a manner, that they were supplied with plenty of all kinds of grain and all sorts of fruit, not only for the Jubilee year, but also for the two following years, on account of the sanctification of the Jubilee year. Such were the advantages and benefits of the Jubilee in the old law ; but they were only figures and shadows of the benefits and advantages that are derived from the Jubilee in the new Law of grace. In the old Law the people received only temporal blessings, that regarded this transitory life ; in the new Law we enjoy many spiritual blessings, that relieve our souls, and open the way to life everlasting. In the Jewish Jubilee, those who had been slaves to men were freed and set at liberty ; in the Christian Jubilee, those who were before slaves of Satan by sin, are released from their bondage and restored to the liberty of the children of God. In the ancient Jubilee debtors were acquitted of all their worldly debts, and recovered their earthly possessions ; in the Jubilee of the Evangelical law, Christians are released from their spiritual debts, reinstated in the favour of God, and recover the right and title to the kingdom of Heaven, and to their past merits, which they had forfeited by falling into mortal sin. In virtue of the power of binding and loosing, and the keys left to the Church by Jesus Christ, they are freed from their chains, released from their captivity, absolved from the guilt of their sins, acquitted from the punishment they incurred thereby, and delivered from the bonds that might otherwise

hinder or retard their souls from entering into the kingdom of Heaven. However, it is only for such sinners as are truly converted and reclaimed from their evil ways, that the Church thus opens her spiritual treasures, and unlocks the gates of the kingdom of Heaven. She claims no power to impart the benefit of an absolution or of an indulgence to those who will not renounce the devil and his works, or who refuse to be reconciled to their enemies, to repair the scandal they have given, to shun the dangerous occasions of sin, to make restitution of their neighbour's property which they unjustly possess, to repair the injuries they have done him, or to drop the detestable habits of cursing, swearing and blaspheming, wherein they are involved. Any abuses that may, perhaps, be committed herein, through the fault or connivance of individuals, cannot with justice be laid to the charge of the Catholic religion; since the Church is so far from authorizing or countenancing them, that she utterly disclaims, censures and condemns them, as appears clearly from the decree of the Council of Trent relative to indulgences, and from the common doctrine of the most learned divines, who assert that pardons and indulgences, granted without a just cause, or without the necessary dispositions on the part of those who apply for them, are not ratified by Almighty God, who, according to the Royal Prophet, Ps. lxxxiv. v. 8, 9. will only *speake peace unto his people and unto his saints*, and grant it to such as recover his sanctifying grace, by *being converted to him with all their heart*. O Divine Jesus, grant us all the grace of a true conversion, that we may draw waters in joy from thy sacred fountains, and be duly qualified to hear these words of peace and comfort pronounced in our favour, which thou hast vouchsafed to say to the sick man, mentioned in this day's Gospel, *Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee*. This is the blessing that I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen*.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Small Number of the Elect.

Multi sunt vocati, pauci verò electi.—*Mat. c. xxii. v. 14.*

Many are called, but few are chosen.—*Mat. e. xxii. v. 14.*

WHO would imagine, my brethren, that a guest invited on the part of his sovereign to partake of a marriage feast, would be sentenced on so solemn and so joyful an occasion to be tied

hands and feet and plunged into a frightful dungeon, where there was nothing to be heard but weeping and gnashing of teeth? Such, notwithstanding, was the dismal fate of the guest spoken of in this day's Gospel. What was the cause of his condemnation? He is not accused of having ill treated the other guests, or of having committed any insolence in the banquet room. All the crime he is charged with is, that he came to the marriage feast without being clothed with the wedding garment. For this reason he was expelled by the waiters, and cast into exterior darkness. By this man are represented all sinners who are void of the grace of God, defiled with sin, and whilst they continue in that unhappy state, exposed every moment to the manifest danger of being excluded from the banquet of eternal glory that is prepared for the elect in the kingdom of Heaven, and of being delivered over to the ministers of divine justice, in order to be precipitated into a gloomy prison, where there is nothing but tears, despair, horror, fatal blindness, devouring flames and eternal damnation.

The Lord, it is true, does not desire the death of any sinner, but that he be converted and live, as the Prophet Ezechiel assures us, c. xxxiii. v. 11. He is not willing that any should perish, says St. Peter, 2 Ep. c. iii. v. 9. Jesus Christ gave himself a redemption for all, says St. Paul, Tim. 1 Ep. c. 4. It is his will that all men be saved, and that they come to the knowledge of the truth, v. iv. He invites all mankind, without exception, to the inheritance of his heavenly kingdom, and supplies them with the means that are necessary and sufficient to attain the happy end of their creation. Nevertheless, it is not to be doubted but the greater part of mankind is lost for ever, since Christ himself declares in the conclusion of this day's Gospel, that *many are called, few are chosen.* This divine oracle is really terrifying, and enough not only to alarm sinners, but also to fill the just themselves with a salutary fear. Theologians and spiritual writers, however, endeavour to throw some light on it, by remarking, that the number of the elect is to be supposed to exceed the number of reprov'd sinners, if we take into the calculation of the elect the immense multitudes of Angels and other heavenly spirits who perpetually surround the throne of God, because the nine choirs of Angels and whole celestial hierarchy are, beyond comprehension, more numerous than all the descendants or the whole posterity of Adam, from the creation to the very end of the world. But if the entire race of Adam be considered separately and apart by themselves; in this case the number of the elect amongst them is by many degrees smaller than the number of the reprov'd, or there are vastly more human beings damned than saved. Some writers do not hesitate to compare the *many* that are lost to the numberless flecks of snow and drops of water which fall from the Heavens on a

winter's day; whilst on the other hand, they draw similes from the Scripture, and compare the number of those who are chosen and saved to the few ears of corn that are picked up by the gleaners during the harvest, and to the few scattered grapes which escape the workman's eye in the vintage time. When the calculation is confined to Christians only, it is generally supposed and believed that the number of the elect amongst them is much greater than the number of the reprov'd, provided all the young children who die in their baptismal innocence be comprised and included in the number; but if we abstract from such children who depart this life in the sanctity of their baptism, and count only the adult, who attain to the age of reason and understanding, it is the common opinion that there are many more grown-up Christians lost than saved, and of course, the number of the elect among them is but small, comparatively speaking. If you ask whence comes this? the reply is easy: From their own demerits, and from their refusing or neglecting to perform the conditions which God requires on their part in order to obtain salvation, namely, to believe what God teaches, and to obey what he commands. In short, there are only two ways that lead to Heaven and life everlasting, the way of innocence, and the way of penance; and there are but few Christians, comparatively speaking, who bid fair for entering Heaven either by the one way or by the other, as I will endeavour to shew you in the following discourse. How few there are who go to Heaven by the way of innocence, shall be the subject of the first point; how few go to Heaven by the way of penance, shall be the subject of the second point. Let us previously implore the divine assistance, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin. *Ave Maria.*

Innocence is undoubtedly a sure road to heavenly Jerusalem, *into which nothing that is defiled will be admitted*; but if we except infants, who after their baptism are mercifully withdrawn from the dangers of this sinful Babylon, *before malice has time to corrupt their understanding*, how few are there, now-a-days, who pass through the road of innocence to the happy mansions of everlasting bliss? Where are those pure souls to be found among the adult who have never been guilty of any actual sin in thought, word or deed? How few are there to be met with in this degenerate age, who constantly live up to the maxims of the Gospel and to the rules of Christianity? Not to speak of the whole race of mankind, nor of the numberless multitudes of idolaters who dwell in those wide extended nations that stretch beyond the tropics, nor of the various tribes of infidels that people the back settlements of America; not to mention the many millions of Pagans who inhabit the extensive empires of Turkey, of Persia, of Tartary, of China, and other populous countries in Asia; not to speak, I say, of all these unbelievers, who live and die not only in the state of

original sin, but likewise under the guilt of many actual sins, which they voluntarily commit against the inborn law of nature, whereof they cannot be supposed to be invincibly ignorant, what shall we think of the generality of Christians, even in Europe? How few, comparatively speaking, are there to be found amongst them who are truly virtuous, and who make Heaven their chief concern? How few who inviolably preserve, to the end of their lives, that sacred treasure of sanctifying grace which they received at the baptismal font, and of which Jesus Christ will demand a strict account on the dreadful day of judgment? How many, on the other hand, are there among them who separate themselves from the fold of Christ by schism and heresy, and who live in an open violation of the laws of God and his Church? How many are there who by their immoralities, dishonour the sacred character they bear, and promiscuously perpetrate those odious and shameful crimes, which, as the Apostle says, should not even be named among Christians, and which, he assures us, Galat. c. v. v. 19. exclude for ever from the kingdom of Heaven?

There are, indeed, the Lord be praised, some happy souls, who like Noah preserve themselves untainted amidst the general corruption; for the Church of Christ never was, and never will be destitute of saints even in the worst of times; but there is reason to fear that out of ten thousand of the adult, there is not, perhaps, one to be found so happy as to carry the white robe of his baptismal innocence from the font to the coffin, without having stained it with some actual sins. Such is the corruption of the world, such is the depravity of human nature since the fall of our first parents, that we almost all begin from our childhood to deviate from the right road, and *decline from the way of virtue*, as the Royal Prophet remarks, Ps. xiii. v. 4. The first use we commonly make of our heart, is to misplace our affections on created objects, and to transgress the great commandment of loving the Lord our God above all things. Our first inclinations are generally vicious, and prompt us to follow the suggestions of blind self-love, and to have no other view but to please ourselves, and satisfy our own will. We are apt to be led astray by a long train of dangerous passions, which form a kind of mist or cloud before our eyes, and hinder us from seeing the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice in their proper colours, until our reason ripens on the sad remains of shipwrecked innocence.

To be more fully convinced that few adult Christians enter Heaven by the gate of innocence, we need only take a general view of the common life of the professors of Christianity; for is it not evident that the generality of them violate their baptismal vows, and that their lives are a direct contradiction to their profession and religious principles? They are hurried on by the impetuosity of their passions; they are constantly occupied in seeking enjoyments and interests incompatible with true

virtue, and they seem to be intent on nothing so much as the gratification of every unlawful desire ; they forsake the narrow painful way of the cross, and run with the crowd into the broad and flowery road of criminal pleasures. *Concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes, and pride of life*, are the three idols to which they pay their homage in opposition to, and in contempt of the living God. If we examine from the palace to the cottage, from the most elevated to the lowest condition of life, we shall find vice reigning amongst every class of men ; we shall scarce see any thing else amongst the great but inordinate ambition, pride, irreligion, a barefaced contempt of piety, libertinism, dissipation, criminal excesses, oppression of the poor, and a shameful abuse of power and authority. Those who move in a lower sphere, and whose circumstances do not permit them to indulge their natural inclinations, are seldom more innocent ; interest is with the generality of them the sole rule and standard of all their actions ; they allow themselves little or no time to think of the great concerns of eternity, or if they spare an odd half hour in the course of a whole week to attend the public worship and great Sacrifice of the Mass on the Lord's day, it is with languor and tepidity, with coldness and indifference. What they are really in earnest about, is the providing the necessaries, the conveniences, the comforts and satisfactions of this transitory life. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of Heaven, instead of sanctifying their worldly occupations by performing them for God's honour and glory, and with a view of pleasing him and discharging their respective duties, their first and principal object is to encrease their possessions, to maintain their station, and keep up their importance on earth, for which purpose they are disposed for any act of fraud and injustice, from which they may possibly derive any benefit or emolument ; for it is remarkable, that their religion and piety decrease in proportion as their wealth and riches increase.

It is also remarkable that those very states, which are most proper to excite Christians to the practice of virtue and to procure the salvation of their souls, such as poverty, afflictions and sufferings, become the occasion of sin and damnation to thousands by the bad dispositions of those who suffer and are afflicted ; so that if prosperity hurries on a great number to eternal perdition, because it blinds them and makes them forget God ; adversity is equally destructive to as many, since it causes them to murmur against divine Providence, and repine against the will of Heaven. If riches are a grand obstacle to salvation, on account of the bad use commonly made of them, poverty likewise sends numbers to hell by the bad use that is made of it. Thus it happens that the powerful and the feeble, the rich and the poor, help and assist to damn each other. The powerful oppress and ruin the weak, and by this means entail damnation on themselves ; the weak are exasperated and en-

raged against the powerful, and thus they damn themselves in like manner; the rich grind the faces of the poor, and therefore are liable to fall victims to God's eternal vengeance; the poor envy, defraud and injure the rich, and thus they are equally exposed to perish eternally. Did time but permit me to take a cursory view of the different branches of trade, and the particular states in which Christians engage themselves, we would discover a thousand low artifices and illegal practices which they recur to, in order to deceive, cheat and circumvent each other. How many are there who seem to place their duty in the transgression of it, neglecting what is commanded and doing what is forbid; Parents are either careless in the education of their children, or children are without due respect and obedience to their parents; husbands are cruel to their wives, or wives are deficient in that love and submission which they owe to their husbands; masters and mistresses are overbearing and tyrannical to their servants and domestics, or domestics and servants are insolent and unfaithful to their masters and mistresses. In fine, there are but very few, comparatively speaking, who perfectly comply with every part of their duty; very few whose virtue is not mingled with some alloy of corruption, and accompanied with many defects and blemishes; very few who sincerely in their hearts prefer God to all things, and are constantly in a disposition of mind rather to lose all, and suffer all, than offend him, and consequently there are but very few, who can pretend a right to Heaven on the title of innocence. Let us now examine, and be yourselves judges, if more souls go to Heaven by the way of penance: This is what I promised to shew in the second point. When I say that there are but few, comparatively speaking, who can claim a right to Heaven in quality of true penitents, I do not mean that there are but few who have recourse to the sacrament of penance; for it is to be supposed that, except libertines and profligates, who make open profession of licentiousness and impiety, and who are neither afraid nor ashamed to trample upon all laws both divine and human; it is to be supposed, I say, that except men of this description, the generality of the faithful acquit themselves in some manner of this duty at or about the holy time of Easter, that is to say, the great number confess their sins; but it is to be feared that amongst this great number there are but few who can be stiled true Gospel penitents, and consequently there are but few of them to be saved, since to do penance is absolutely necessary to salvation, according to this terrible sentence pronounced by Jesus Christ himself: *Unless you do penance you shall all perish.* For what is a true Gospel penitent? A penitent, says Tertullian, is he who always has a deep sense of his great misfortune in having lost the favour and friendship of his God, and who has incessantly before his eyes the sad image and remembrance of his sins, and is affected by a true and sincere sorrow for them. A penitent is he who

frequently repasses in the bitterness of his soul, those years he spent in vice, and detests and heartily bewails the crimes by which he has offended the Almighty; a penitent is he who leads a new life, and endeavours to expiate his past sins by the laborious exercises of penance and mortification, thereby to prevent the dreadful punishments which he has deserved, and which the justice of God has a right to inflict; a penitent, in fine, is a person charged with the interest of God's justice against himself, who looks therefore on his body as an enemy that must be weakened, as a rebel that must be chastised, as a delinquent to whom all favour and indulgence should be refused, as a criminal destined to die, because he no longer deserves to live, and consequently his dress, his actions, his whole deportment should bespeak austerity, mortification and compunction.

Such is the character of a true Gospel penitent, but, my brethren, penitents of this kind, where are they to be found? The early years of Christianity could indeed boast of penitents of this character; in them happy times sinners of all ranks were frequently seen prostrate at the gates of the Churches, covered with sackcloth and ashes, crying out to Heaven for mercy, striking their breasts, like the publican, with grief, and conjuring their brethren who entered into the house of God, to obtain for them by their prayers the pardon and remission of their crimes. For a single mortal sin they passed whole years in the painful exercises of fasting, praying and weeping and debarred even of innocent recreation; they allowed themselves no other comfort but that of tears and repentance, because they had the misfortune to offend the Lord their God. Such were the true penitents in the primitive ages of Christianity, and thus they endeavoured to efface and expiate their past sins. The least vestige or trace of this ancient discipline and penitential spirit is, now a-days scarce visible in the conduct and deportment of the generality of modern Christians. If fasting, or any other work of mortification be enjoined them as a salutary penance; if the observance of the Lent, the Fridays and Saturdays, and other days of abstinence prescribed by the Church, be insisted on as a necessary duty, a thousand excuses are immediately framed. If you take their own word for it, their health is impaired; they are of a delicate constitution; their state of life will not admit either of fasting or abstinence; it is too heavy a burden, which they are unable to bear. In quality of Christians, they are followers of a Leader who was crowned with thorns, and disciples of a Master who lived in sufferings and died in torments; and yet they can scarce abide to hear talk of penance or mortification, of fasting or self-denial, much less to practice them, though their manifold and grievous sins cry aloud to Heaven for vengeance. In short, they either totally neglect the Sacrament of Penance, and live and die in a state of final impenitence, or they approach the sacred tribunal without the necessary dispositions, without an hearty sorrow for

their sins, without a firm and sincere purpose of amendment. Judge then, my brethren, if the greatest part of the faithful can claim a right to Heaven in quality of true and sincere penitents. Judge if you yourselves can ground your pretensions to life everlasting on the same title.

As a farther proof of the great number of Christians who perish eternally, how many are there who wrong and defraud their neighbour, and how many make restitution? The first are almost without number; and the second very rare. Of an hundred persons, you will scarce find one but complains of having suffered some damage by fraud and injustice; and notwithstanding, what restitution do we see made? What satisfaction for the damage done? This is what the fraudulent and unjust do not even think of, and still nothing more certainly entails damnation on them than a neglect of this duty; nothing being more clear than they shall perish eternally, if, having it in their power to do it, they will not restore the property of their neighbour whom they have defrauded, and repair the damage they have willingly caused. After this, need we require other proofs to be convinced that there are incomparably more souls damned than saved, and that even in the midst of Christianity there are few who enter Heaven by the gate of penance, in comparison of the great numbers that are lost for ever, because they do not repent in the sincerity of their hearts, nor produce the fruits that are worthy of penance. How many habitual and relapsing sinners are there to be found amongst the penitents of our days, who are constantly re-plunging into the same favourite vices, and refuse to shun the dangerous occasions of sin, or take any pains to restrain their passions and overcome their evil habits? How many are there who, abusing the mercy of God, and presumptuously relying on the uncertainty of a death-bed repentance, put off their conversion to the end of their life, and resolve to quit sin only in their old age, when sin may be said to quit them? Old age may indeed disengage a sinner from the follies of youth; adversity, the loss of health, a wrecked constitution, worn out in the pursuit of vice, and exhausted by criminal excesses, may chill his blood, quench the fire of his passions, restrain the inordinate inclinations of his heart, and give him a natural aversion to sin. His crimes, of course, may cease then, but is he for this reason to be deemed a sincere penitent? Or is it to be supposed that he can command at will a true sorrow and compunction of heart, with a hatred and detestation of sin, because it is offensive to God's infinite goodness? No, my brethren, the sorrow such sinners have for their sins often amounts to no more than a wish that they could continue to sin with impunity. The offence given to God is a matter they seldom consider; they regard nothing in religion but its menaces, and the torments of an hereafter; and were there no hell to be feared, it is to be apprehended that they would live and die like Atheists, without faith, religion, and

remorse of conscience. If so, my brethren, as undoubtedly is the case of numbers of false penitents, have I not reason to conclude that the generality of christians do not bid fair for entering the kingdom of Heaven, either by the gate of innocence or by the gate of penance? Perhaps you will object and say, that the great God is merciful, and that he did not put you into the world to damn you. Merciful he is, indeed, praise, honour and glory be to his holy name, and were it not for his boundless mercy we would be all lost and undone for ever; but he is equally just and faithful to his promises, and he has no where promised to admit all sinners into the kingdom of Heaven, but he has expressly declared the reverse. He has not put you into the world to damn you; but let me ask you, did he put you into the world to be wicked, to be unjust, to be lewd, to be revengeful, to defame and detract, to rob and cheat your neighbour, to be drunkards, cursers, swearers and blasphemers? No, my brethren, God has put you into the world to love and serve him; and if, instead of loving and serving him, you constantly offend him and transgress his commandments, it is your own fault if you are not saved. It is you yourselves, who damn yourselves, and the Lord may justly say to you as he formerly did to the Jews: *Israel, thy perdition is entirely owing to thyself.* He created you without your own assistance, says St. Augustine, but he will not save you without your own concurrence. He requires the co-operation of your own free-will with the graces which in his mercy he dispenses, and it is for want of this co-operation that of the *many who are called, so few are chosen.* Awake then, O sinners, from the fatal lethargy of sin, and labour in good earnest to be of the small number of God's elect. Contend to "enter in at the narrow gate;" for *broad is the gate, and wide is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who enter by it; but the gate is narrow, and the way is strait that leads to life, and few there are that find it,* as Christ our Lord expressly says in the Gospel, Matt. c. vii. v. 13, 14. If, therefore, my brethren, you have had the misfortune to shut the gate of innocence against yourselves, you still have a resource. The gate of penance is yet open, and you have it in your power to recover the friendship of God, and to carry the kingdom of Heaven by means of a true and sincere conversion. An affair of such importance admits of no delay, but requires your most serious attention and application. All is gained if Heaven be gained; and if Heaven be lost all is lost, and lost for ever without resource. O let me entreat you to sleep no longer on the brink of hell, and in the arms of perdition. Remember that the sword of divine justice is unsheathed, and hangs over your head, supported only by the slender thread of life, a thread which may break every moment; and should it happen to break, and death surprise you in a bad state, defiled with sin and void of virtue and merits, eternal misery must inevitably be your doom.

Let the terrifying truths which I have announced to you this day inspire you with a salutary fear, but let your fear be always accompanied with confidence in the mercies of God, and the merits of your Blessed Redeemer. O amiable Jesus ! we humbly prostrate ourselves at thy feet ; we throw ourselves into the arms of thy tender mercy, with a firm hope and confidence in thy goodness that thou wilt not suffer our souls to be eternally lost, since they have cost thee the last drop of thy precious blood. Draw us to thee by thy all-powerful grace and the bonds of divine love, that after loving and serving thee here on earth, we may be admitted hereafter into the number of those happy souls, who are to be in thy presence for ever. This is the blessing, which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Respect due to the House of God.

Domus mea domus orationis est.—Lnc. c. xix. v. 46.

My house is an house of prayer.—Luke, c. xix. v. 46.

THE Universe may be considered as one extensive habitation and spacious temple, formed by the almighty power of God, and replenished with his divine presence, according to the remark of the Prophet Baruch, c. iii. v. 24. where he cries out with astonishment, *O how great is the House of God, and how vast is the place of his possession ! It is great and hath no end ; it is high and immense.* A serious consideration hereof, caused King David to cry out to God in Ps. cxxxviii. "Where shall I go, O Lord, to hide myself from thy spirit ? Where shall I fly from before thy face ? If I ascend up to Heaven thou art there ; if I descend into hell thou art there also ; if I take wings to fly to the extremity of the earth, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 'tis thy hand that guides me, and thy right hand that shall hold me. I said to myself, perhaps the darkness may cover me ; but I know that even the darkest night becomes luminous to shew me to thee, for darkness, O my God, is not obscure to thee, nor is the night to thee less clear than mid-day." Thus this Holy King reasoned with himself, concluding from thence that he was under an obligation to hold himself always in the presence of his God, and never to forget that he is every

where, that he sees all things, knows all things, and fills all things with his immensity. St. Augustine, speaking of the immensity of God, figures it to himself as a vast ocean, in which all creatures, to use his expression, are swallowed up and penetrated with the essence of God, without ever being able to come out of him or to disengage themselves from him, because they are present to him by the necessity of their being. Is it not then just that man, who is an intelligent and rational creature, should honour and respect God in all places, and walk continually in his presence without ever straying away or losing sight of it, especially as there is not a greater preservative against sin, nor a more powerful incentive to virtue, than to remember always that God sees us, and that he is a witness not only of our actions, but likewise of our most secret intentions.

However, as a great part of the earth which we inhabit is either contaminated with vice, or laid out for temporal affairs and profane purposes, and as our manifold necessities and worldly avocations do not allow us to be at all times, and in all places, in that respectful posture and devout employment, with which we should endeavour to present ourselves before the infinite majesty of God, it was expedient that some particular places should be sanctified and set apart for this sacred and religious purpose. Hence we read in the Old Testament, that certain places have been particularly chosen, sanctified and appropriated to the divine worship, both in the law of nature and under the written law of Moses, and that the Almighty God himself has been pleased to manifest the wonderful effects of his power and goodness in these places more frequently and more copiously than in others; for as he thought proper to make choice of some particular times in preference to others for displaying the riches of his mercy, and to appoint certain festival days to be devoted in a special manner to his divine service, though he is equally Lord and master of all days and of all times, so he has likewise thought proper to choose certain particular places in preference to others for his special habitation, there to receive the homage and submission of his faithful servants, and to bestow his gracious favours and blessings more readily and more abundantly, though in the interim he is intimately present in all places, fills the wide expanse of Heaven and earth with his immensity, and cannot be limited or confined within the precincts or walls of any material edifice, like unto the idols and false gods of the Gentiles, as St. Paul speaks, Acts, c. vii. My present design is to take a comparative view of the types and figures of the old Law, and of the asylums of piety and religion which, in the new Law of grace are dedicated to the worship of God by the solemn consecration and benediction of the Holy Catholic Church. The transcendent sanctity of these sacred places shall be the subject of the first point. The great respect

that is due to them, and the profound reverence and edifying piety with which we ought to conduct ourselves therein, shall be the subject of the second point. Let us previously invoke the assistance of the Divine Spirit, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, &c. *Ave Maria.*

The Book of Genesis informs us, c. xxviii. that the Lord appeared to Jacob at Bethel in the mysterious vision of a ladder, the foot of which stood upon the ground, the top seemingly reaching to Heaven, and numbers of Angels ascending and descending by it. Whereupon Jacob, trembling and filled with awe, adored the Divine Majesty as there present; and having erected a stone for a title, he poured oil on it and cried out, *How awful is this place! It is truly no other than the dwelling-place of God, and the gate of Heaven; the Lord is most certainly here, and I knew it not.* The holy Patriarch was not ignorant that the Lord was present in all places by his immensity; but until then he knew not that the Lord had chosen that particular place, and sanctified it by a special presence which required a peculiar respect and veneration. The Almighty appeared likewise to Noah, Abraham, and other Holy Patriarchs and Prophets, and they accordingly erected altars to his honour, and worshipped him in the particular places where he had appeared to them, and had given them sensible marks of his special presence; but Solomon was the first man that ever erected a permanent Temple to the living God. During the forty years that the children of Israel were travelling through the desert, they had no other place of worship but a portable Temple, that is to say, the Tabernacle, which was erected in the middle of their camp by the express orders of God himself, who was pleased to accept the vows, oblations and sacrifices of his people in that particular place. When they arrived at Jerusalem, and were formed into a commonwealth, he ordered a magnificent Temple to be built in that city, that they might invoke his holy name therein, and adore him with greater splendour and solemnity. The amazing grandeur and magnificence of that Temple served to inspire them with a reverential awe and respect; it was so august, and upon so grand a scale, so highly embellished and so richly decorated, that the view of it impressed their minds with some idea of the beauty and splendour of Heavenly Jerusalem, and of the infinite grandeur and glory of God. The Scripture tells us, that when the solemnity of its dedication was completed, the majesty of God filled the whole Temple, and having caused fire to descend from Heaven and consume the prodigious number of holocausts that were offered on the occasion, the Lord was pleased to appear to Solomon, and assured him that he *had chosen that holy place for his own habitation, and that his eyes would be open, and his ears would be attentive to the prayers which his people would offer therein.* Hence, Daniel in his captivity,

opened his window towards Jerusalem three times a day, and prayed with his face towards the Temple, when he could not go there in person. The Jews were accustomed to flock to it from all parts, in order to adore and glorify the Lord in it, by the most solemn acts of religion. They held this holy Temple in such respect and veneration, that they were accustomed to premise several ablutions and purifications before they would venture even to approach the exterior court, that served as a barrier to keep them at a greater distance from the Holy of Holies, which was in the interior Court of the Temple. None but the Priests were permitted to enter into the interior court, every other person being forbid under pain of being stoned to death. Nay, the Holy of Holies was inaccessible to every one except the High Priest himself, who after many preparatory exercises of religion, was allowed to enter into it once a year, with the blood of the immolated victims, this sacred place being a figure of Heaven, which was shut against man till Christ our High Priest, entered there, covered with his own precious blood, as the Apostle speaks, Heb. c. ix.

Such, my brethren, was the respect the people of God, in the old Law, paid to these sanctified places which were appropriated in a special manner to the divine Service; such, in particular, was the reverential awe and veneration which the Jews testified with regard to the Temple of Jerusalem, and which God himself enforced with so much rigour that he punished the least profanation of it with great severity. In the Book of Leviticus, chap. xix. he expressly commanded them to *reverence his Sanctuary*, and to do nothing in it but what tended to his honour and regarded his worship. Nay, he ordered Aaron and his sons to wash their hands and feet before they approached the altar and Tabernacle, and Moses to take off his shoes when he approached the burning bush, out of respect to the holy ground whereon he stood; and he forbid the Israelites even to approach the holy Mount on which the Law of the Ten Commandments was published.

These examples are recorded in Holy Writ for our instruction, and are so many convincing proofs of the singular respect that is due to those Christian temples and sacred houses of religious worship, which under the new Law of the Gospel are dedicated to the honour of God, and sanctified in a particular manner by his special presence. It must be acknowledged that they are by many degrees more holy and more venerable than the Jewish Temple, or any of the other ancient types and figures, as these were no more than empty shadows of the good things which Christ was to confer on us. Our churches, chapels, and oratories, are by excellency the *houses of God*, and are therefore stiled by the Prophet the *new Heavens on earth*, which were promised to the children of the New Testament. Here there are no barriers between God

and his people as there were in the Temple of Jerusalem. Our Divine Redeemer has destroyed the wall of separation that kept mankind at so great a distance from the Holy of Holies. Here it is not the flesh of oxen, sheep, or other animals that is offered up in sacrifice, as in the Temple of Jerusalem, but the immaculate flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, the innocent Lamb of God and Saviour of the world. It is the very same adorable victim which was once offered up in a bloody manner on Mount Calvary, that is here immolated on our altars in an unbloody manner; it is the same precious blood which flowed upon the cross, that continues here to plead our cause, and to cry aloud to Heaven for mercy on our behalf; it is, in fine, the pure oblation and commemorative sacrifice of the new Law that is here offered up every day, and that surpasses all the sacrifices of the old Law as much as the substance and reality surpass the shadow and figure, or as much as Christ himself in person and dignity exceeds all the victims that were formerly immolated. O what would the pious Israelites have done, with what sentiments of religion would they have been penetrated, if they had possessed in their Temple the heavenly treasures, favours and blessings which Christians enjoy in their churches and chapels? With what fervour and zeal would the holy King David have been inflamed and actuated? He, who cried out to the Lord, Ps. xxv. *I have loved the beauty of thy house, O Lord, and the place of the habitation of thy glory.* The Scripture tells us, that he paid such respect and honour to the very Ark of the Covenant that he danced before it in transports of joy, and caused it to be brought in triumph to the capital of his kingdom amidst the sounds of musical instruments and the joyful acclamations of a numberless multitude of his subjects. Josue and the elders of Israel prostrated themselves also before it with the most profound reverence and humility, and the people, with an holy emulation, contributed such quantities and heaps of their most valuable effects, their plate, their rings, their bracelets, their finest stuffs and richest ornaments for the purpose of decorating the Tabernacle, that Moses found it necessary to give them notice, by a public crier, to bring no more, Exod. c. xxv. Yet what was their Tabernacle? What was their Ark? What did their Ark contain but the two tables of the decalogue, the rod of Aaron and a small portion of the manna that fell from Heaven? What was their Tabernacle in comparison of the tabernacles and sanctuaries of the holy Catholic Church, wherein is deposited the most holy, the most inestimable treasure in the world, the most venerable Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist, wherein Jesus Christ the living Ark of the New Testament, is really and substantially present to feed and nourish the souls of the faithful, not with corruptible manna, as the Israelites were fed in the desert, but with the true and life-

giving food of Angels, with the banquet of his own sacred body and blood? He remained nine months in the virginal womb of his blessed mother, forty days in the stable of Bethlehem, three hours on the cross, and three days in the sepulchre; but he is present at all hours in our sanctuaries, ready to give us a favourable audience, and to dispense his gracious favours and blessings with a boundless liberality. Here he abides with us, not only by his immensity, but also by the real presence of his sacred humanity. Here he dwells and resides among us as a King in his palace, and a Sovereign on his throne, to receive our petitions, to hear our prayers, to redress our grievances, to grant our requests, and to make us partakers of the holy sacraments which he instituted as so many fountains of grace for the sanctification of our souls. Here, in fine, he presides in the sacred tribunals of penance, in the persons of his representatives, whom he authorizes and commissions to forgive the sins of repenting sinners, with a solemn assurance that whosoever sins they forgive on earth in his name, and by his authority, shall be forgiven in the Court of Heaven, provided the penitent has recourse to his mercy with proper dispositions. Let us now briefly consider the great respect that is due to those sacred places, and the manner in which the faithful ought to present and conduct themselves therein.

The primitive Christians held their oratories and places of public worship in such respect and veneration, that, as Eusebius the historian informs us, whenever they assembled therein to celebrate the divine mysteries, they were accustomed both at the beginning and conclusion of their religious duties to cry out, in imitation of the Patriarch Jacob, *How awful is this place! it is no other than the House of God and the gate of Heaven!* The very presence of the Angels; who, as St. John Chrysostom says, are here continually attending the God of all glory, was sufficient to fill them with a reverential awe, to inspire them with sentiments of piety, and to make them say with the Prophet, when they approached the entrance of the house of God, *In the multitude of thy mercies, O Lord, I will enter thy house, adore thee in thy holy temple, confess to thy name, and sing to thy praise in the sight of thy Angels.* St. Paul made use of this argument when, 1 Cor. c. xi. v. 10. he ordered a woman to have her head modestly veiled in the church, out of respect to the Angels there present. In those early ages of Christianity the faithful were cruelly persecuted, and yet they zealously attended every day in their places of worship at the hazard of their lives and fortunes, being persuaded that the prayers which they offered up unanimously, assembled there together in a body, were more efficacious, more prevalent, and more acceptable to God, than private devotions performed at home. Far from committing any irreverences in the house of God, they behaved there in a manner

becoming the disciples of a crucified Jesus, assembled together to commemorate with gratitude the dolorous mysteries of his passion and death. Their interior was recollected and elevated to Heaven by attentive and devout prayer, and their exterior was composed by a decent appearance and a modest deportment, which redounded to the honour of God and to the edification of their neighbour. They were sensible that *sanctity becomes the house of God to the end of time* as the Royal Prophet says, Ps. xcii. and for this reason they came to it with the most profound humility, looking on themselves as unworthy to appear in the presence of the Divine Majesty, particularly when they found their conscience burdened with the guilt of sin. It is related of the great St. Jerom, that he trembled at the very thoughts of entering even into the repositories of the relics of the holy martyrs, whenever he happened to be disturbed with any little motion of anger, or to be assaulted with evil suggestions or nocturnal phantoms in his sleep.

As for notorious and scandalous sinners, they were absolutely refused admission into the Church, until they had previously expiated their crimes, and atoned by public penance for the public scandal they had given. The ministers of the altar were accustomed to shut the gates in their face, and to repel them with these words of the Scripture, Apocal. xxii. *Far from hence the impure and the unclean ; far from hence all idolatrous, murderers and liars ; the holy things are reserved for those who are holy.* We have a remarkable instance hereof in the Emperor Theodosius ; St. Ambrose would not suffer him to enter into the church of Milan, until he had performed a rigorous penance of eight months, amongst the public penitents at the outside inclosure of the porch. With what eyes will you behold this temple ? said the holy Bishop to him. With what feet will you tread in this sanctuary ? Depart and do not attempt to aggravate the guilt of your past sins by a fresh crime. It is true, indeed, the rigour of this ancient discipline is no longer enforced ; sinners are not debarred from entering our places of public worship, nor from assisting at the holy sacrifice of the mass, unless they be publicly excommunicated and personally denounced. However, the spirit of the Church being still unchangeably the same, though her discipline may vary with the times, she continues to exhort her children to appear always in the presence of the Divine Majesty with due reverence and respect. If they are not so happy as to be in the actual state of grace, she entreats them to come at least to the house of God free from all affection to mortal sin, and with minds occupied with pure affections ; she admonishes them to present themselves with the dispositions of the humble publican in the Gospel, with a hatred and detestation of their past sins, and a sincere desire of renouncing their evil ways, and of breaking the chains of

iniquity with which they are fettered. The vessels of holy water, which are usually placed near the porches and doors, are so many monitors to remind them of the purity and cleanliness both of soul and body, with which they should endeavour to appear before the Lord their God, and to assist at the great sacrifice of the new Law.

St. Justin Martyr informs us, that the Pagans of his age paid such respect to their temples, that they were accustomed to enter them barefooted, and that they had the picture of silence painted on the walls, with an inscription ordering the most profound silence to be observed there, and commanding all profaners to withdraw. The Turks and Mahometans of our days have likewise their mosques and their pagods, wherein they behave with all the decorum and decency that their false religion prescribes; and shall we, my brethren, who glory in being Christians and professors of the true religion of Jesus Christ; shall we, I say, misbehave and be guilty of irreverences and profanations in our churches and chapels? Shall we suffer ourselves to be outdone by the very Pagans themselves? Is not their example sufficient to confound those who, instead of worshipping God in spirit and truth, and edifying their neighbour by their exemplary piety, behave, under the all-seeing eyes of their Creator, with as much levity, irreverence and disrespect, as if they were in a play-house? Is it not enough to cover those Christians with shame, who carry their impiety to the very foot of the altar, and in the very midst of the divine mysteries are constantly talking, laughing, gazing, distracting and disturbing others? If the conduct of such persons be reprehensible, what are we to think of those who insult the sanctity of God's house still in a more audacious manner? What are we to judge of those who come with a wicked design, with a bad intention, with a view to pick the pockets of such as they observe to be attentive to their devotions, and to steal away whatever they can lay their sacrilegious hands on?

The dreadful punishments which the Lord has inflicted, from time to time, on the profaners of sacred things and sacred places, plainly shew the enormity of this crime, and should be a warning to all persons to avoid it most carefully. Ozias, a King of Juda, who was struck with a leprosy for having thrust himself into the Sanctuary and offered incense; the sons of Aaron, who were consumed by fire from Heaven for having made use of profane fire in their censers; the Philistians, who were scourged with dreadful plagues for having placed the Ark in the temple of their idol Dagon; the Bethsamites, who were punished with sudden deaths for having gazed at the Ark with an over-great curiosity; Oza, a Prince of Juda, who was struck dead on the spot for having indiscreetly touched the Ark with his hand; Heliodorus, a commissary of King Antiochus, who, as we read, Machab. ii. was scourged almost to

death by two Angels from Heaven, for having attempted to rob the Temple of Jerusalem. These are so many dismal instances that prove how offensive the lowest degree of sacrilege is to the Almighty God.

We need but consider what the Gospel relates, concerning our Blessed Saviour overturning the stalls and money-tables of the buyers and sellers, and whipping them out of the Temple with indignation, to be convinced what a grievous sin it is to profane and dishonour the house of God. This was the only sin, as St. Augustine remarks, that could make Jesus Christ act in a manner seemingly opposite to that heavenly sweetness and meekness which, on all other occasions he always manifested to the greatest sinners, and for which he was so remarkable; that the Prophet Isaiahs stiled him the *Prince of Peace*: He bore all his own sufferings with the most astonishing patience, but was moved to an holy anger when he saw the Temple of Jerusalem profaned. He reproved the world for many crimes; but he would punish with his own hands no crime but sacrilege. He employed words of mercy and indulgence to reclaim publicans and notorious sinners; but he made use of a rod of justice to punish the profaners of his heavenly Father's house with rigour and severity, reproaching them at the same time with having made it an house of traffick: *My house, said he, shall be called an house of prayer, but ye have it a den of thieves*, Luke, c. ix. Let us therefore, my brethren, beware of the like abuses and irreverences. Let us honour God in all places, but particularly in those sacred places which are honoured by his special presence and devoted to his worship. Let us always appear in his divine presence with due reverence and respect, and pay unto him the just tribute of our homage with a tender and attentive piety, and with a spirit of recollection and true devotion, that after having honoured and adored him religiously in his temples here on earth, we may see and enjoy him hereafter in the eternal temple of his glory in the heavenly Jerusalem. Which is the happiness that I heartily wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Loving our Enemies, and pardoning Offences and Injuries.

Sic Pater meus cœlestis faciet vobis, si non remiseritis unus quisque fratri suo de cordibus vestris.

Mat. c. xviii. v. 35.

So shall my heavenly Father do to you, unless every one of you forgive his brother from your heart.

Mat. c. xviii. v. 35.

THERE is no valuable quality of the mind more generally approved of in speculation, and less regarded in practice, than that of moderating our resentments, refraining from anger, and treating those who have injured us with meekness and humanity. Yet the Son of God never spoke with greater authority, nor declared his will more decisively, than in regard to this article; for he knew that none but himself could oblige us to forgive and love our enemies sincerely. Sovereigns and magistrates might indeed put a stop to exterior acts of vengeance, and even hinder a furious person from making use of opprobrious language; but to stretch this command to the heart, and compel us to stifle our inward resentments, and return good for evil, was the privilege of God's infinite power and justice. It is for this reason he calls it by excellence his *own commandment*. The rest he was pleased to promulge by his ministers, but this he promulged himself, as the thing in life he most desired and resolved to have observed most religiously.

That Pagans, darkened with the clouds of infidelity, should despise and reject a law so repugnant to human pride, and so contrary to the impulses of self-love, is not to be wondered at; but that Christians, enlightened with the rays of divine grace, should loudly proclaim, that to bear tamely an affront is to authorize insolence; that Christians, listening to nothing but what the impiety of a degenerate age inspires, or their own depraved nature and weakness of reason suggests and prescribes, should endeavour to extenuate the practice of a law so completely glorious, is what astonishes the preachers of the Word of God, and becomes a subject worthy of their greatest zeal and eloquence. Wherefore, I shall endeavour to

shew you that to love your enemies, and do good to those that hate you, is not a simple counsel, but a precept wholly divine and worthy of him, who, in the Scripture is stiled the *Prince of Peace*, and whose wisdom only could suggest so sublime a law, and contrive so wonderful a means to govern the universe in peace, and to unite the hearts of all the faithful in the bonds of charity. And though this Law is comprized under the general precept of charity, which obliges us to love all mankind without exception or reserve, yet as it is commonly considered a part by itself, as a duty containing two members, namely, that of loving our enemies and pardoning injuries, I shall briefly lay before you the indispensable obligation and necessity of complying both with the one and with the other. But let us first invoke the assistance of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of that immaculate Virgin, who was replenished with the richest treasures of his divine grace. *Ave Maria.*

It was a common error among the Jewish sectaries, to confine the love of their neighbour to the sole love of their friends and the people of their own nation, and to exclude all others; nay, the Scribes and Pharisees imagined it lawful to hate their enemies and to retaliate injuries. But our Divine Redeemer, who came down from Heaven to kindle the fire of charity on earth, took care to condemn their erroneous doctrine, and to teach his disciples that brotherly love is a debt which we owe all mankind, and which no provocation or offence can ever cancel. "You have heard," says he in the Gospel, "*that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say to you not to resist the evil.*" "You have heard that it was said, 'thou shalt love thy neighbour and thou shalt hate thy enemy; but I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who persecute you and utter calumnies against you; to the end you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven, who maketh his sun rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust; for if you love those that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans do this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not even the publicans do this?' Matt. c. v. It is neither a Moses, nor an Elias, nor any earthly Prince or Judge that lays down these rules, but it is Jesus Christ, whom our sins have fastened to a cross; it is that Sovereign Lord and all-powerful Judge, who is to decide our endless misery or perpetual happiness for time and eternity. He not only inculcated this divine Law by his word at his first and last sermon, but also vouchsafed to enforce it by his own example; for what was his whole life but one continued practice of love and charity to his enemies? Was it not his love for his enemies that brought him down from Heaven, clothed him with the human nature, and made him endure the greatest hardships, humiliations and sufferings? All the base treatment he received from the Jews could not hinder him from

spending three whole years amongst them in continual endeavours to procure their everlasting happiness. He wrought all kind of miracles during that time, for the sake of a people the most ungrateful that ever lived upon the face of the earth, and who, he knew, were to repay all his favours with a most ignominious death. When two of his disciples, John and James, requested that he would cause fire to descend from the Heavens to burn the Samaritans, for having refused him admittance into their city, did he not reprimand them severely, and say, *You know not of what spirit you are; the Son of Man is not come to destroy souls, but to save them.* At his last supper, did he not prostrate himself at the feet of the traitor Judas with the most amazing humility, and wash and wipe them with the same marks of love and tender affection, as if he were one of his truest friends? Did he not afterwards embrace him most lovingly in the Garden of Olives, and miraculously heal the right ear of Malchus, who came treacherously to seize on his sacred person? If we follow him to Mount Calvary, we shall find him in the midst of his most painful agony on the cross, forgetting himself and imploring mercy and pardon for his cruel executioners, at the very time they were spilling his precious blood. *Father forgive them,* said he, *for they know not what they do.* Thus it was, my brethren, that our heavenly Legislator spent his last breath in fervent prayer for his murderers, preaching charity and patience from the pulpit of the cross, and recommending, by his own example, the strict observance of that favourite precept and divine Law, which, during the course of his mortal life he had so warmly and so frequently inculcated, as the characteristic badge and mark that was to distinguish his disciples from the rest of mankind. *It is hereby,* says he, *Jo. c. xiii. v. 35. that all men shall know that you are my disciples if you love one another.*

The very genius and spirit of Christianity consists in this godlike disposition, and it is in vain for us without it to assume to ourselves the honour of bearing the name of Christians. In vain do we pretend to be followers of the meek and humble Jesus, unless we be in charity with our brethren, love our enemies, and encounter their malice with the arms of patience, meekness and humility. *He that hateth his brother,* says St. John, *is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes,* 1 Ep. c. ii. v. 11. and again, c. iii. v. 14, 15. *He that loveth not, abideth in death, and every one that hateth his brother is a murderer,* because he thereby murders his own soul by depriving it of the life of grace, and the hopes of eternal life. Whilst he remains in that unhappy state his fasts, his prayers and offerings are not acceptable in the sight of God, who prefers the duty of fraternal love to sacrifice, though sacrifice is the highest honour we can pay to his Sovereign Majesty; For this reason Christ our Lord says, in St. Mat. c. v. v. 21, 22. *If thou offerest thy*

gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee, leave thy offering before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then thou shalt come and offer thy gift.

You will say, perhaps, that it is difficult for flesh and blood to love an enemy, to put up with an injury, and to be reconciled to those that hate us. I own it is difficult to embrace our friends and foes with the same complacency and tenderness of heart; but are we not sensible that the holy religion we profess is not an incentive to flatter our weakness and gratify our senses, but to restrain and enervate our passions, and destroy our prejudices? Do we not know that the kingdom of Heaven is to be carried by an holy violence to our corrupt nature? Is not the reward of an happy eternity capable of making an impression on our souls and enforcing a passage to our hearts? Is it not possible with the assistance of divine grace, *to overcome evil by good*, to conquer the malice of an enemy by meekness, and to repay an injury with charity and benevolence? And ought we, who after a thousand reiterated crimes, have received numberless proofs of God's mercy, to think it severe, mean or despicable to love and forgive for his sake those who have injured and offended us? Are we not happy to have it in our power to obtain the pardon of our manifold offences upon such favourable terms? Our case, in reference to Almighty God on the one hand, and our neighbour on the other, is similar to that of the servant mentioned in this day's Gospel, who being summoned to give up his accounts, and being found indebted to his master in the sum of ten thousand talents, which he was unable to discharge, was forgiven the whole debt upon his humbly imploring mercy; for if we look into the state of our conscience, we shall perhaps have reason to apprehend a more heavy load of debt lying upon our own souls. We shall acknowledge that every mortal sin we have been guilty of in our life is an immense debt, a sum, alas! of ten thousand talents, which we are utterly unable to discharge of ourselves. However, the Lord is as ready to forgive us this immense debt as the master was to forgive his servant, provided we imitate in some measure his goodness, in compassionating our neighbours and forgiving the trifling debt and small offence for which they are indebted to us. But if we imitate the unmerciful servant, who, instead of having patience with his fellow servant, and allowing him some time for the payment of the hundred pence he owed, seized on him with open violence and cast him into confinement; if, I say, we harden our hearts in this manner, and shew no mercy to our brethren, we must expect to be treated hereafter like him with the utmost rigour, and to be delivered over to the ministers of God's severe justice until we shall have paid the last farthing; for, as Christ says in the conclusion of the aforesaid parable, *It is thus my heavenly Father shall treat you, unless every one of you*

forgive his brother from your heart. Lest we should ever forget or lose sight of this great duty, he has thought proper to insert the following petition in the form of daily prayer which he has taught us, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*; after which he took an occasion to enlarge upon this petition alone, and said, *If you forgive others their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your sins; but if you will not pardon men, neither will your Father pardon you your sins*, Mat. c. vi. v. 14, 15. This plainly shews that to forgive our brethren sincerely, from the heart all the injuries and offences they commit against us is a condition absolutely necessary, in order to obtain from God the forgiveness of our own sins. How then can we without trembling, repeat these words, *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive*, if our heart tells us, at the same time, that we do not forgive? Is it not calling for justice instead of mercy, for vengeance instead of compassion, unless we forgive? Is it not bespeaking our own condemnation, and a denial of the pardon we sue for in reciting the Lord's Prayer? Christians who are about approaching the sacred tribunal of penance, and who wish to be qualified for the benefit of the sacramental absolution, should reflect seriously on these important truths, and lay aside all rancour and ill-will, resentments and animosities. They must, in the sincerity of their hearts, forgive all those who have offended and injured them, if they expect to be forgiven themselves; for though in other respects they may be seemingly well disposed, yet as long as they persist in an unforgiving, revengeful temper, and harbour hatred and malice in their hearts to any one person in the world, they are utterly unworthy of the mercy they sue for; their repentance is no better in the sight of God than a mockery, their confession is void, the absolution they deceitfully receive is null, and instead of discharging their debts, they only encrease their reckoning, and return back with the additional guilt of sacrilege. What is more, if they die in that state, there is no room for mercy, since, as St. James assures us, c. ii. v. 13. *Judgment without mercy shall be dealt out to him who hath not shewn mercy*; God will deal with him, in this respect, just as he shall have dealt with his neighbour, according to these words of the Gospel, *With what measure you shall measure to others, it shall be measured to you again*, Luke, c. vi. v. 38.

If we consult the old Testament, we shall find that the great duty of fraternal love for enemies, and of forgiving injuries and offences received, was reduced to practice long before the promulgation of the Evangelical Law. What shall we say of the Patriarch Joseph with regard to his brethren, who had combined against his life and sold him as a slave to be carried away from his father's house into Egypt? What an illustrious example of forbearance and charity do we also behold in King David with regard to his mortal enemy Saul, who sought all

opportunities to take away his life, and was so much incensed against every one that relieved David, or shewed him any kindness in his greatest distress, that for this reason he caused all the inhabitants of Nob to be massacred, without even sparing the children, or the brute animals themselves, and ordered Abimelech with fourscore and four priests to be put to death, because they had given David some of the sanctified loaves to eat during the time of his exile. Notwithstanding all this unheard of cruelty, David loved Saul most affectionately, spoke favourably of him wherever he went, and rendered him all the good services in his power, at the very time that Saul thirsted after his innocent blood, and was searching the mountains and dark caverns of the earth where he supposed David was hiding, in order to find him and put him instantly to death. On one of these occasions David, accompanied with a number of his trusty friends, happened to meet Saul alone in a solitary place, where, had he been disposed to be revenged, he might have easily secured his own life and peaceable possession of the royal crown of Israel for himself and his family after; but he was so far from laying violent hands on him, that he dismissed him unhurt, after cutting off the skirt of Saul's robe to shew that he had him in his power. This made St. John Chrysostom say: as often as I reflect on the meekness and charity of King David, finding his greatest enemy alone in a solitary cave, I look upon that cave as a temple, where he offered unto God the most acceptable of all sacrifices, not that he sacrificed the flesh of animals there, but because he surmounted his own anger, and resisted all desire of revenge, which is a thousand times more agreeable to the Lord; he acquired more glory in suffering Saul to go away unhurt than he acquired by defeating the formidable Giant Goliath, and cutting off his head; he stood in no need of a sling, a stone or a sword; he obtained, without weapons, the most signal of all victories in forgiving his enemy; he did not return from the field of battle carrying the head of a giant in his hands, but subduing the most violent of all passions. The women and daughters of Israel did not sing as they did after the defeat of Goliath, *Saul killed a thousand and David ten thousand*, but the Angels in Heaven, who were faithful witnesses of his sincere charity, proclaimed his victory, and published his glory among the blessed.

Say no longer, then, my brethren, that it is impossible to love your enemies, and do good to those who pursue you with the greatest malice, hatred and disdain. Christ does not command impossibilities; *His yoke is sweet, and his burden is light*. Thousands of holy martyrs amongst the primitive Christians, who wore the same flesh and blood with us, preserved in their hearts the most sincere affection and charity for their enemies, and sought no other way to be revenged of them than by praying for them, and overcoming evil with good. They suffered

the loss of every thing that was dear to human nature with patience, and endured the sharpest trials and the most barbarous cruelties with the meekness of lambs and the simplicity of doves. Far from retaliating, far from regarding their persecutors as objects of their anger and aversion, they looked upon them as the instruments of divine justice, and bore the injuries done them as coming from the hand of God, and designed for their spiritual good. When they were imprisoned, scourged, stoned and put to death, they prayed for their enemies, they rejoiced that they were deemed worthy to suffer ignominy for the name of Jesus, and they laid down their lives without shewing the least resentment. Where shall we find such examples of charity and moderation now-a-days? How often, alas! do modern Christians, for want of observing the maxims of the Gospel, turn enemies to their own repose and traitors to their conscience? How often do they provoke the divine vengeance against themselves, and unchristianly, as well as imprudently, revenge upon their own souls the real or imaginary injuries done to their persons? If they do not imbrue their hands in the blood of those whom they suppose to be their enemies, and that for fear of falling victims to the justice of the civil laws, how often do they wish for their death, and murder them with their hearts, though not with their hands, and stab their reputation with their envenomed tongues? They grieve at their prosperity, rejoice at their adversity, inveigh against them with bitterness, and take pleasure in hearing them reviled, traduced and detracted by others; they cannot endure their presence, nor bear to hear a favourable word said of them; they obstinately reject all terms of reconciliation, and refuse to return even an answer or a salute. Others, indeed, more moderate, will say that they forgive those whom they call their enemies, that they bear them no ill-will and wish them no harm, but never desire to see their face or sit in their company. Surely, my brethren, it cannot be reasonably supposed that this is sufficient to comply with the great law of charity, and discharge the obligation of fraternal love, which our Divine Legislator commands us to bear unto all those who are created after his image, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and destined to inherit his kingdom. Would we be satisfied to be forgiven ourselves by God on these terms only, so as never to be admitted into his divine presence, nor to see his blessed face? To bear no ill-will, or wish no harm to our neighbour, what is this more than what we do to the common beasts? The Law of God requires a more sublime perfection and sanctity from us. *If thy enemy be hungry, says St. Paul, feed him; if he be thirsty give him drink; for in doing this thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, Rom. c. xii. v. 20,* that is, according to the interpretation of St. Ambrose, thou wilt mitigate his anger and make him your friend. The effects of your charity will rekindle his that was dead, as a burning coal lights

another that was quenched. By this condescension you will contribute to save his soul, and extricate him from the jaws of hell. This is charity; this is loving our neighbour in God and for God; this, in short, is loving God in our neighbour, and it is in this manner we are to love our enemies and gain over those that hate us. Look down upon us, we beseech thee, O Blessed Jesus, from the throne of thy bliss with the eyes of pity, and grant us, by the merits of thy passion and death, that spirit of charity with which thou didst cry out from the cross for thy most cruel enemies, saying, *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* Verify in our hearts what we so often repeat with our tongues, saying, *Father, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* Fill our hearts with such abundant charity as may entitle our souls to the joys of Heaven, where we hope to see and enjoy thee for a never ending eternity; which is the blessing, my brethren, that I sincerely wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SECOND DAY OF NOVEMBER.

On the Sufferings of the Souls in Purgatory.

Miseremini mei, miseremini mei, saltem vos amici mei, quia manus Domini tetigit me. — *Job. c. xix. v. 21.*

Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord has smitten me. — *Job. c. xix. v. 21.*

WE have reason to thank the Lord, for having called us to a religion, whose charity and zeal extends itself beyond the limits of our mortal life, and we should deem ourselves happy in being the children of a Church which, after closing our eyes here below is solicitous to assist us in the other world. That of our separated brethren thinks no more of her members when she once ceases to see them; her solicitude for them reaches no farther than the grave, and this is but a natural consequence of the innovations made in the ancient faith in the two last centuries; but the Catholic Church, that plaintive dove and beloved spouse of Jesus Christ, does not intermit her sighs and her prayers until she has placed us in the bosom of eternal happiness; her charity embraces all the members of Christ; it maintains a mutual intercourse between them, and engages her to share both the miseries and afflictions, the comforts and blessings of all that are comprised in her communion. Hence, as she is composed of three parts, the triumphant Church in Heaven, the militant

Church on earth, and the patient or suffering Church in Purgatory, she unites every part of her mystical body, and from the vespers of the present great festival of all the saints in Heaven, she celebrates the solemn commemoration of all the souls in Purgatory, that the faithful here on earth, who compose the Church militant, may join unanimously on these days in imploring the intercession and prayers of the saints who compose the Church triumphant, and in praising and glorifying the Lord for their triumphs and crowns, and that they may in a particular manner solicit the divine mercy in favour of the Church patient, and afford them a share in their alms-deeds, devotions sacrifices and other good works, as they are not able in the least to assist themselves, the time of mercy and merit being now over for them, and the night being come in which they cannot work, as St. John speaks, c. ix. v. 4. It is for this reason that these suffering souls address themselves to us, and borrow the voice of the Church, which to express their moans and to excite our compassion cries out to us for them in these words of Job, *Miseremini mei, &c. Have pity upon me, &c.* My present design is to expound the belief and doctrine of the Church concerning purgatory, and then to lay before you not only the motives that should excite our compassion and engage us to assist the souls of the faithful therein detained, but also the means whereby they may be effectually relieved. Behold the subject and plan of the following discourse. Let us previously implore the divine aid, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, greeting her with the angelical salutation, *Ave Maria.*

The belief of a Purgatory, or of a third and middle state of souls, is an article of faith, grounded not only upon Scripture, but also upon the perpetual tradition and constant practice of all ages and nations since the earliest years of Christianity, as appears from the unanimous testimonies of the holy fathers, the most ancient liturgies, and the most venerable monuments of antiquity both in the Greek and Latin Church. There are no less than six texts in the new Testament to prove the existence of a Purgatory, and the old Testament is so explicit on this head that nothing can be more conclusive. It is true, indeed, the last sentence in the general judgment only mentions Heaven and hell, because these are the two only great receptacles of all men both good and bad, for all eternity, as there will be no Purgatory after the general judgment. It is also very true of every man at his death, that on whatever side the tree falls, on that it shall always lie, whether this text be understood of the body or of the soul; the doom of the soul is then fixed for ever, either to life everlasting or to eternal damnation, so that in this respect it will find itself always in an unchangeable state, whether it comes to the south or to the north, that is to Heaven or to hell. If it departs this life under the guilt of mortal sin, it will ever remain in that state, and eternal torments will be its portion. If it departs in the state of grace, it will

likewise remain so, and everlasting bliss will be its inheritance. But this does not exclude a temporary state of purgation before the last judgment for those who die in a state of grace, and who nevertheless, at the hour of their death, are defiled with some lesser blemishes and stains of venial sin, or who have left some part of the debt, which they owed to the divine justice, uncanceled on account of something that was wanting in their life-time to the perfection of their repentance; for St. Paul, 1 Cor. c. lii. speaking of such Christian souls; whose works have been imperfect and defective, though not to the degree of losing Christ, expressly says that *they shall be saved, yet so as by fire*, from whence it follows that they cannot enter immediately into the joy of the Lord, without passing first through a temporary state of purgation, or as the Apostle says, through a fiery trial, that is, through the fire of Purgatory, for it is evident that no one can ever be saved who suffers hell fire, since out of hell there is no redemption.

Moreover, the Gospel, Mat. c. xii. v. 32, gives us plainly to understand that some lesser sins may be forgiven in the world to come, according to the remark of St. Augustine, and consequently that there must be a middle state or a Purgatory, for the relaxation of such sins, as no sin can enter Heaven to be forgiven there, and in hell there is no forgiveness. Christ also, Mat. c. v. v. 27, mentions a prison and place of punishment, out of which souls shall be delivered though not before. *they shall have paid the last farthing*, and this place of punishment, according to St. Jerom and St. Cyprian, cannot be understood of any other place than of Purgatory, out of which the souls therein confined, are not to be released, until they shall have fully satisfied the divine justice for the least venial sin they have committed. Such is God's hatred of the least sin, and such is the opposition which the stain of sin bears to his infinite justice and sanctity, that the smallest fault excludes a soul from Heaven so long as it is not blotted out. Nothing which is not perfectly pure, clean and spotless, can stand before him who is infinite purity and sanctity, and who cannot bear the sight of the least iniquity; for which reason the Scripture says, that *nothing defiled shall enter into the holy city of the heavenly Jerusalem*, Apoc. c. xxi. v. 27. Unless, therefore, a Purgatory be admitted for purifying the souls of the faithful departed, it would follow that a just man, who dies suddenly after committing a venial sin, can never enjoy the presence of God, which is inconsistent with the goodness of God, and repugnant to the dictates of reason. It would also follow, that except three classes of Christians, scarce any, if any at all, can ever be admitted into the kingdom of Heaven; for except children who die in their baptismal innocence; secondly, martyrs, who seal their faith with the effusion of their blood; thirdly, renowned saints and illustrious penitents, who by extraordinary rigour and penitential austerities fully expiate all their faults in this

life, there is reason to believe that, perhaps not one in ten thousand of the adult departs this life, so pure, so spotless, and so perfectly purged from all the dregs of sin, as to be fit to go straight to Heaven, and pass immediately into the kingdom of unspotted sanctity, since even in great penitents whose repentance is sincere, there usually remains some satisfaction to be made, or some debt of temporal punishment to be cancelled, as appears from several illustrious instances in Holy Writ, such as David, Moses, Aaron, and the Israelites in the wilderness. The very best Christians themselves must acknowledge that they sin daily, and fall by surprize into some venial faults and small offences which, if not effaced by condign penance in this world, deserve to be punished in the next by the justice of God. Hence we read of some renowned saints, that they trembled at the thoughts of the dreadful account they were to give God for every idle word and thought, and that from a conviction that every sin, great and small, mortal and venial, is an offence to God, and must be punished, as St. Augustine says, either here or hereafter, either by the voluntary penance of the sinner, or by the vengeance of an angry God; so that when the sinner neglects or omits punishing him in this life, and dies without having fully satisfied for his past sins by penitential works, he must of course expect in the next life to feel the severity of divine justice, which will not leave the least sin unpunished, as it will not leave the least good action unrewarded.

As to the particular place of punishment where the Justice of God obliges him thus to detain such souls until their debts are fully discharged, or the kind and quality of torments they suffer, or the manner in which they suffer, nothing has been defined by the Church. However, it is certain, that their pains are beyond all human comprehension. St. Augustine, and other learned fathers and eminent doctors and pastors of the primitive Church, who flourished upwards of a thousand years before the Reformation, are of opinion that they suffer a real and material fire like that of hell, which being created merely for an instrument of the divine vengeance, and blown up by the breath of an angry God, has the wonderful virtue of tormenting spirits with the most piercing activity, and causes much more intense, more acute, more violent, and more grievous pains than whatever we can conceive, imagine, or endure in this world. Our natural fire, compared to the fire of Purgatory, is, according to the aforesaid holy doctor, no more than a painted fire. St. Thomas of Aquin teaches, that the same fire torments the damned in hell and the just in Purgatory, and that the least pain in Purgatory exceeds by many degrees the greatest in this life. Represent, therefore, to yourselves the racks, the plummets, the iron combs, the gibbets, the boiling caldrons, the scorpions, the glowing gridirons and other tortures of the holy martyrs, summed up together, with the most cruel torments that have been ever invented by the most barba-

rous tyrants, they would be all light and tolerable in comparison of the fire of Purgatory. Such is the idea that the holy fathers give us of the pains which the souls suffer there for the expiation of venial sin, and God alone knows how long many souls may have to suffer there; what is certain is, that the judgments of God are hidden and unsearchable; for which reason St. Paul says, Heb. c. x. v. 31. *It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* He searches Jerusalem with a lantern; he discovers defects and blemishes even in his elect, and exacts a satisfaction to the very last farthing. The souls of the holy Patriarchs and Prophets of the old Law were confined in the prison, called Limbo, some thousands of years, and we know how inexorable the Lord was in punishing his faithful servant Moses for one small offence, how inflexible with regard to David and other penitents, and how rigorously his justice exerted itself in the person of his own Divine Son, whom he did not spare, but delivered up to the most ignominious and most painful death of the cross.

All this should be a warning to you, my brethren, to expiate in time all your sins, both mortal and venial, and to cancel the debts you owe God's justice, by fasting, praying, alms-deeds, and other satisfactory works, whilst the sun of grace and mercy shines. We should endeavour to prevent the rigours of the other world by embracing the rigours of a penitential life in this world. We should study to preserve our souls from the purging flames of the next life by receiving with patience and resignation the crosses and trials, sicknesses, afflictions and other hardships that are incident to our respective states; we should bear them in the spirit of penance and humility, as coming from the holy hands of God, and frequently cry out to the Lord with the penitent Augustine, to scourge and afflict our bodies, and to give us our Purgatory here on earth so as to spare our souls hereafter. And since we know the ingratitude and ill nature of the generality of mankind, who think no more of their friends when they disappear from their eyes, we should endeavour not to stand in need of them, but watch over ourselves during this life, that nothing may retard our future happiness when we are dead. For this end we should shun most carefully all faults, even the most light; we should, according to the Apostle's advice, beware of erecting *wood, hay or stubble*, that is, venial sins, committed either deliberately, or through negligence, or even such as seem to be the pure effects of human frailty, building on the rich foundation of faith and sanctifying grace, *gold, silver and precious stones*, that is, spiritual treasures of Christian virtues and perfect works, on which the fire of Purgatory has no power. It is for want of taking these wise precautions, that numberless souls are now sentenced to the purifying flames of Purgatory. O my brethren, did you but behold this fiery dungeon under your feet, how sweet and agreeable

would the name of penance sound in your ears? Had you but a view of the dreadful torments the souls here endure, your bowels would be moved, your hearts would be affected, and your eyes would stream with tears. They thirst most ardently after the joys of Heaven; they long impetuously for the happy moment that is to unite them closely to the Lord, and to associate them to the choirs of Angels. They are bound with chains which they are not able to break; they are burning in flames which they cannot extinguish. From the midst of these scorching flames and waves of fire they cry out to you for help; they beseech you to comfort them in their affliction, to succour them in their distress, to relieve them in their extreme necessity, and to release them from that painful captivity which retards their enjoyment of bliss. O give ear to their sighs and moans, which seem to pierce through the very bowels of the earth. Listen to the mournful supplications, whereby the Church militant represents each of these souls imploring your assistance: *Miseremini, &c. Have pity on me, &c.* Were you but allowed to penetrate this dark abyss, perhaps you would distinguish, among the rest the voice of a tender parent, of a close relation, of a bosom friend, suffering there for a number of years on your account, and like the poor sick man who, as we read, John, c. v. lay thirty-eight years at the pond of Jerusalem, destitute of a friend on earth to stretch forth a charitable hand to help them. There are, perhaps, this very instant, many such helpless and friendless objects lying on a bed of fire in the midst of Purgatory, and earnestly craving a spiritual alms from you, that may be thereby delivered from their torments, and released from the debts which detain them imprisoned. You have it in your power to relieve them, and to procure them their liberty on easy terms. You may rescue them from their devouring flames, by applying to them the benefit of the indulgences which you gain, by offering for their relief a part of your devotions and penitential works, and by paying into the hands of the poor the ransoms of the captives you wish to deliver; for the alms-deeds, fasts, prayers, sacrifices and suffrages of the living, offered to God for the faithful departed, are powerful and effectual means to discharge them from the debts which they have contracted, God being pleased in his mercy to accept of them in their favour, on account of the *Communion of Saints*, or the mutual participation of good works that subsists between all the members of Christ's mystical body, the Church. Hence it has been the universal practice of the faithful in all ages, since the days of the Apostles, to offer up prayers and supplications for the dead, which is a proof that they held the Catholic doctrine of a middle place, where the faithful departed might be assisted by the suffrages of the living, and that they uniformly believed that all souls do not go straight to Heaven or hell,

since prayers cannot be any way available to such as die in mortal sin and go to hell; nor are they wanting to such as are immediately admitted into the kingdom of Heaven. Hence also the Church, exclusive of the other suffrages which are offered up in the course of the year, commands all her Clergy, by a special precept, to recite at this season the whole Office of the Dead, and to offer up all their masses, in all parts of the Christian world, for the souls of all the faithful departed. O what consolation is it to us, my brethren, to reflect, that after the dreadful moment of our passage from death to eternity, the entire Church of God will interest itself thus in our favour, and that all the faithful all over the world, even those who do not know us, will be praying with the ministers of the altar for the happy repose of our souls, and labouring for our deliverance? With what heartfelt satisfaction may we not say with holy Job, *Reposita est hæc spes mea in sinu meo: This hope is lodged in my bosom.* Nay, the people of God, long before the birth of Christ, were accustomed to offer up prayers and sacrifices for the happy repose of the faithful departed, and for their deliverance from the temporal punishment due to their sins. We have an illustrious instance hereof in the 2d Book of Machabees, c. xii. where we read that Judas Macabeus, the virtuous High Priest and the chief commander of the Jewish republic, inspired with religious sentiments, sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem, in order to have a sacrifice offered up in the Temple for the souls of the soldiers who had been slain in battle, being convinced that, as the Scripture says, *It is an holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be released from their sins.* Christ himself was willing to serve us as a model, and to give us in his own person an idea of the devotion and zeal we should have for the souls in Purgatory; for as the Apostles teach us in the Creed, *He descended into hell*, that is, into that prison where the souls of the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets were confined along with the spirits who had been incredulous in the days of Noe. Jesus Christ descended into that prison, in order to comfort them by his presence and deliver them by his power. His example should encourage us to descend in spirit into Purgatory, and to afford the souls in prison there all the relief in our power, by offering up our suffrages to the Lord for their speedy deliverance. By contributing thus to hasten their enjoyment of bliss, we shall not only be the means of sending their souls to Heaven to sing the eternal praises of the Lord, in concert with the angelic choirs, but we shall likewise make friends for ourselves in the Court of Heaven; for the souls delivered by our prayers will not repay our kindness with ingratitude; they will never forget our charity; but like so many powerful advocates and intercessors, they will pray for us in their turn, and employ their interest with the Lord in our behalf. On

the contrary, if we be insensible to their wants and deaf to their cries, we will justly deserve to have *the same measure given to us with which we measure unto them*. If we forget them now, God, perhaps, will permit us likewise to be forgotten when it comes to our turn. O Father of mercies and God of all consolation, inspire us with sentiments of charity and compassion for all our distressed and suffering brethren. Have pity, we beseech thee, in the name and for the sake of Jesus thy beloved Son, on the souls of all the faithful departed. Deliver them from the temporal punishment justly due to their past sins. Eternal rest grant them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. Admit them we pray thee, into thy heavenly kingdom, and to a participation of that endless glory for which thou hast created them; and which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

*On the Sin of Covetousness and Injustice, and
the Obligation of making Restitution.*

Reddite quæ sunt Cæsaris Cæsari, et quæ sunt Dei Deo.

Mat. c. xxii. v. 21.

Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.

Mat. c. xxii. v. 21.

THIS Sunday's Gospel informs us, that the Pharisees, in concert with the Herodians, endeavoured to ensnare the innocence of our Blessed Saviour, by proposing a question to him, which they imagined he could not answer without either forfeiting his reputation and credit among the people, or drawing on himself the frowns and indignation of the Roman Government, to which Judea was then become tributary. They asked him *Was it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not?* If he replied, that tribute ought to be paid him, they expected that such an answer would render Christ odious in the eyes of the Jews, who looked upon the Romans as usurpers of their country, and believed themselves to be exempted from paying tribute to any foreign Prince whatsoever, as they were the chosen people of God. If Christ answered, that tribute should not be paid, the Pharisees were in hopes that he would thereby incur the displeasure of the Roman Governor,

and of course be treated as an enemy to Cesar. But the Son of God, knowing their secret thoughts and intentions, defeated their malicious designs, and made them shortly retire with shame and confusion. Having called on them to produce a piece of the current coin of the country, he asked them whose image or inscription was stamped on it. They replying that Cesar's image was stamped on it, our Divine Redeemer concluded and said, *Render unto Cesar what belongs to Cesar, and to God what belongs to God.* By this wise answer he confounded the malice of his enemies, and gently upbraided them with their hypocrisy, in shewing so much apparent zeal for what might procure them the esteem and applause of men, whilst they neglected paying to Almighty God the honour and glory due to his Divine Majesty, from every one on whom he has stamped his image and likeness. Different mystical interpretations are given to these words of our Lord; but, at present I shall confine myself to the literal and obvious sense, and endeavour to lay before you some important instructions concerning the virtue of Justice, and the indispensable obligation of making restitution, which arises from a violation of it. Permit me then, my brethren, to impress this divine oracle deeply on your minds: *Render unto Cesar what belongs to Cesar.* Pay your just debts; give all men their due; do not covet your neighbour's goods; restore his property, which you have either unjustly acquired or which you unjustly retain; for without restitution, at least in will or desire, when it is otherwise impossible, there can be no forgiveness, no salvation. Behold the entire plan of the following discourse, and the subject of your favourable attention. Let us previously implore the divine assistance, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin. *Ave Maria.*

Covetousness, says St Paul, is the root of all evils, and the source of numberless crimes. Men who set their hearts and affections too much upon money fall into temptations and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown them to destruction, plunge them into perdition, cause them to err from the faith, and entangle them in many sorrows, 1 Tim. c. vi. v. 9, 10. Other vices usually stare the sinner in the face, and are so glaring and palpable, that when he falls into them he soon becomes sensible of his error, and often repents; but covetousness disguises itself under the mask of prudence and necessity. Those who are slaves to this dangerous vice, are so strangely biassed and blinded, that they are not sensible of it themselves. What covetous man is there that believes he is covetous? Nothing is more common in the world than to see those, who set their hearts and affections upon riches, applauding themselves as wise, frugal and prudent men, whilst they are considered by others as mere misers, who have not the heart to use what they have, and are always poor and in want of more; for the

more the avaricious man has; the more he desires. All other passions are somewhat satisfied, at least for a time, but covetousness is insatiable; it is never contented. Like the leech mentioned by Solomon, Prov. c. xxx. it thirsts still after more, and is ever restless and disquieted between the distre of getting and the fear of losing. Riches to a good Christian are like his clothes, he puts them off without pain; but to a covetous man they are like his skin. If he parts with them, it is with great reluctance and exquisite torment. A good Christian, like holy Job, feels the loss when deprived of them, and resigns himself to the will of Heaven, blessing God and saying, *The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* But the covetous man, when he meets with any loss, murmurs, repines, complains, and becomes a prey to impatience and despair. His mind is continually occupied, even in time of his religious duties, with the thoughts of accumulating worldly treasures. He neglects his spiritual concerns when they interfere with his temporal interest. He is unfeeling, unmerciful, and hard-hearted to the poor. He is backward in paying his servants wages, in giving tradesmen and labourers their hire, and in discharging his other just and lawful debts. In short, his attachment to the perishable goods and possessions of this transitory life is so inordinate, that he places his happiness therein, and he loves money to such a degree, that, to acquire it he has recourse to unlawful means, and to all kinds of frauds and palliated usuries, especially when he can do it with impunity or without being detected. It is in a man of this character that the following words of Ecclesiasticus, c. x. v. 9. are verified in a particular manner; *There is not a more wicked thing than a covetous man, for such a person setteth even his own soul to sale.* Mammon is his God and his darling idol; for the love of it he turns his back upon his Creator, neglects his religious duties, breaks all the commandments, tramples upon the divine law, oppresses the poor, is guilty of lies and prejuries, bribery and corruption, sacrilege and treachery, and stops at no fraud, deceit, extortion or injustice, provided he may but fill his coffers. The malignity of this vice appears clearly in Achab, Heliodoros, the rich glutton mentioned in the Gospel; Ananias and Sapphira, and unhappy Judas, who sold and betrayed the Son of God himself for the love of money.

It would be an endless task to enumerate all the evils that spring from this dreadful vice, or to point out the various species of injustice, and the many sinful traffics, unlawful contracts, artifices and crafty ways, which covetous men have invented and contrived for the purpose of circumventing and defrauding others, there being scarce any state or profession of life, scarce any occupation or branch of trade, but is subject to frauds and impositions. All the different ways of committing injustice are comprehended under this general prohi-

bition. *Thou shalt not steal.* By stealing, or by theft, in general, is understood an unjust taking away, damaging, or retaining what belongs to another against his will, by secret fraud, cheating, or imposition. The malice of this crime is so glaring and so manifest, that the greatest profligates are not ignorant of it, even amidst the thickest darkness of infidelity. In the law of nature, before any written law was given, mankind knew full well that it was unlawful to rob or steal, as appears plainly from the 31st and 44th chapters of Genesis, wherein mention is made of the theft of Rachel and of the brothers of Joseph. When the Lord afterwards gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, he expressly forbid theft, and all unjust actions in the seventh commandment, and in the tenth commandment he forbid all unjust desires of what belongs to our neighbour; he also decreed severe punishments against the transgressors of this Law, as we read in c. xxii. of Exodus. It is related in the 2d Book of Kings, c. xii. that when the Prophet Nathan told King David that a rich man had forcibly taken away a sheep from a poor man, the King pronounced sentence of death against the rich man. The seventh chapter of the Book of Josue relates also that the Lord permitted three thousand of the Israelites to be conquered by a small number of their enemies, in punishment of the theft of Achan, and that the wrath of Heaven was not appeased until Josue ordered all that Achan possessed to be consumed by flames, and Achan himself to be stoned to death by all the people, amongst whom there was neither man, woman, nor child but cast a stone at him in detestation of his crime. The second book of Machabees, c. iii. and ix. affords us likewise two dreadful instances hereof in the persons of King Antiochus and Heliodorus; the former of whom, by a just judgment of God, was eaten up by worms and cut off the face of the earth in the midst of his sins, and the latter was scourged almost to death by two Angels from Heaven for having attempted to rob the Temple of Jerusalem. Hence it is evident that theft which is committed by hidden fraud, and rapine or robbery, which is committed by open violence, are of their own nature grievous sins, manifest breaches of justice and charity, subversive of the public good, prohibited by the laws of nations, a direct violation of the positive Law of God, and contrary to the very first principle of the law of nature, which forbids us to do unto others what we would not have others to do to ourselves. For this reason St. Paul condemns covetousness as a species of idolatry, and ranks theft and robbery, the sad offsprings of it, in the black list of the mortal sins, which exclude from the kingdom of Heaven. *Neither thieves, nor the covetous, nor extortioners shall possess the kingdom of God,* says this great Apostle, 1 Cor. c. vi. and in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, c. iv. v. 6, he cautions every man not to over-reach, deceive, or circumvent his neighbour, *because the*

Lord is a revenger of all those things. The most obvious frauds which you are to be cautioned against in particular, are those which occur in daily practice amongst traders, and which are committed in buying and selling, such as using false measures and light weights; cheating in number and reckoning; in the price, substance, quantity or quality of goods; putting off false money, buying and receiving stolen goods; selling defective, damaged and adulterated goods for sound and saleable; buying for others and charging more for an article than it really cost, with a view of pocketing the overplus in a clandestine manner; entering into private compacts and combinations to raise goods above their real value, or to lower them under their real value by the same fraudulent means; taking advantage of the ignorance, necessity, or distress of a buyer or seller, and selling goods for more than they are worth, and considerably above the common market rates, or buying them under the lowest degree of the just price and considerably beneath the common value. This desire of selling above the value and buying under the value is common to several, who, as St. Thomas of Aquin says, are walking in the broad way of sin and perdition; they imagine they may buy goods as cheap as ever they can, and sell as high as ever they can; but they are greatly mistaken, for justice requires an equality between the price and the goods that are bought or sold, and for this reason the virtue of justice is usually represented by a pair of scales, which equalizes things that are exchanged one for another. You will, perhaps, ask me, is it not reasonable that a trader should get a livelihood and make an advantage by his trade? It is certainly reasonable, but this advantage ought to be regulated by the principles of justice; for if it be not consistent with them, he is bound to forego all such interest rather than enrich himself by fraud, or let his bread be the fruit of injustice. He should remember, that it is better to have a little with the fear of God, than to possess great and insatiable treasures, as the wise man says, Proverbs, c. xv.

The Scripture is particularly severe against usurers, extortioners and monopolists, who prey upon the very vitals of the poor by their extortions, and who, by engrossing to themselves the necessaries of life cause an artificial scarcity, and raise the markets beyond the reach of the common people. It denounces a dreadful war against those who defraud poor servants and workmen of the whole or of a part of their wages, and says that the tears of the widow and the orphan whom they oppress and crush by their unjust practices, and the sighs and complaints of poor labourers and other indigent and helpless objects whose faces they grind, cry aloud to Heaven for vengeance against them. The Scripture likewise inveighs in the strongest terms against the traders and dealers who make use of false weights and false measures. *Wo be to him*, says the

Prophét Habacuc, c. ii. *who heaps together, and multiplies what is not his own*; and Prov. c. xi. and xx. *A deceitful balance is an abomination before the Lord; diverse weights and diverse measures are abominable before God*, and again, Deuterom. c, xxv. v. 13. *Thou shalt not have diverse weights in thy bag, a greater and a less; neither shall there be in thy house a greater bushel and a less, for the Lord abhorreth him that does those things, and he hates all injustice.*

This plainly shews how criminal a practice it is to accumulate by degrees, or by little and little, any considerable portion of other men's property, or to form the will and intention of gathering together a large quantity or sum by several petty thefts and small injustices, repeatedly committed against the same person, or against the community at large. Every petty theft thus committed contracts the guilt of mortal sin, because it proceeds from a will tending to a considerable object, and the will of stealing a considerable quantity is a mortal sin, although the matter stolen with such an intention should happen to be only small in itself.

But what judgment is to be formed of debtors who deny and refuse to pay their lawful debts? It is plain that they are guilty of a manifest breach of justice, especially when they contract debts which they intend never to pay, or when they defer the payment too long, to the great prejudice of their creditors, or involve their creditors in tedious and vexatious law-suits, in order to weary them with unnecessary expences, and force them to quit their just pretensions, or to compound at an under-rate, for fear of greater inconveniences.

As for domestic frauds which are committed by married women, children and servants, it is not to be doubted but they fall under the general prohibition of theft. The holy Scripture says, Prov. c. xxviii. v. 24, *that a child who steals from his father and mother, and says this is no sin, partakes of the guilt of a murderer.* Parents are likewise guilty of injustice when they neglect to provide for their family, and squander in extravagancies what is necessary for the support of their children, or rob one child of his birthright in order to enrich and exalt another. In fine, those who are charged and entrusted with the management of other people's affairs, or who are in any public office, and do not discharge their respective duties and functions faithfully, incur the guilt of injustice, besides a grievous breach of trust. To inspire you with the greater abhorrence and detestation of these evils, permit me to add a few words on the nature and indispensable obligation of restitution, which arises from a violation of justice; it is what I promised to lay before you in the second point.

Restitution is an act of commutative justice, whereby a thing is restored to its right owner either in kind or in itself, if it be still extant, or if it be embezzled, consumed or destroyed, an equivalent in value; for justice requires an equality be-

tween what is taken away and what is restored in its place, with an exact proportion between the loss and damage unjustly caused, and the reparation that is made. The very first principle of the law of nature inculcates this important duty, as it dictates that we should do to others as we ourselves would wish to be done by, and consequently that we ought to give every one his own, that we ought to pay our lawful debts, and make a just compensation for any injury we have done. As there are various ways of committing injustice and injuring others, so, in like manner, there are various sources from whence the obligation of restitution arises. Generally speaking, there arises an obligation of restitution from a breach of each of the commandments, which forbid us to injure our neighbour in his person, his goods, his honour, his character and reputation. The seventh commandment, which forbids theft, rapine and every other species of injustice, commands and obliges us to be just in our dealings and transactions, to discharge the debts we have contracted, to repair the damages we have occasioned, and not to retain another's man's property against his will, or without his knowledge and free consent, it being equally injurious to retain the property of another unjustly and to take it away unjustly. This made St. Augustine say, l. 50, hom. 9, that they who find their neighbour's goods, and conceal and retain them, are guilty of a breach of God's commandment, which forbids theft. *What thou hast found and not restored thou hast stolen it*, says this holy doctor. The precept of restitution is expressly mentioned in several parts of the Old Testament, particularly, c. xxi. and xxii. of Exodus, c. vi. of Leviticus, and c. xxxiii. of Ezechiel, where the Almighty says, *If any thing be taken away by stealth, the damages shall be restored to the owner; and if any man hurt another man's field or vineyard, and put his cattle to feed on his neighbour's property, he shall restore according to the estimation of the damage.*

And really, my brethren, it was not only expedient but necessary that the Lord should thus establish the law of restitution, in order to protect honest and industrious men, and secure each individual in the peaceable possession of the external goods of fortune with which his divine Providence is pleased to bless him. What security or protection would there be, if knavish and ill-designing men were exempted from the burden of restitution, and could as easily elude the divine Law and escape the justice of God, as they elude the civil law and escape human justice? Would it not be a strong temptation to them to enrich themselves with the spoils of their neighbours whenever they could do it without being discovered? Would it not be a means of making the world become a den of thieves? If, in the present system, notwithstanding the curb of restitution, we hear of so many criminal traffics, so many frauds and circumventions, so many unlawful profits

unjust combinations and crafty stratagems, invented and contrived for the purpose of cheating and wronging the simple and unwary, we may easily judge to what lengths human depravity would drive covetous and avaricious men, if they were under no obligation of making restitution.

It is only on this condition that the Lord promises forgiveness to repenting sinners, who have been guilty of sins of injustice. In order to obtain pardon, they and all their accomplices, who have concurred and co-operated with them either directly or indirectly, must, in the first place, satisfy God by humiliation and penance for having transgressed his holy Law; they must likewise satisfy their neighbour by restoring his property, and by compensating to the utmost of their power the loss which he sustained through their fault. For this reason it has always been the constant practice of the Church to refuse absolution and the holy sacraments of reconciliation to thieves, robbers, usurers, extortioners, unjust dealers, receivers, accomplices, and usurpers of other men's goods, unless they sincerely renounce their detestable practices and make restitution for their past injustices. No power on earth can dispense with them in this duty, or discharge them in conscience from this burden, except the injured person relaxes the obligation, or the right owner of the goods which have been unjustly acquired, or which are unjustly retained, gives his free consent. A consent given by those, who have it not in their power to give up their right, as is the case of children under age, is not sufficient; neither is the consent sufficient which is extorted by force or fear, such as that of the ten men who gave up all their treasures to Ismael, in order to save their lives, as we read, Jerem. c. xli. v. 8. Such a consent, I say, is not sufficient, because it is not free and voluntary, but compulsory, like unto that which a street robber or a highway man forces from those whose pockets he empties against their will. Hence it follows that those who take an advantage of the necessities and distresses of the poor, and extort their consent to pay unlawful interest or exorbitant prices, and likewise those who fail or break designedly to defraud their creditors, and force them to enter into an unfair composition, are not excused in the sight of God from the obligation of making restitution and paying their lawful debts, because the consent that is given in similar cases is not free. Nothing but a real impossibility, or an absolute incapacity, can discharge them from the burden of restitution, and even in this case it is necessary for them to be firmly resolved to acquit themselves of this duty if ever in their power, and to satisfy for the injury and injustice done to others, as far as they are able. Unless they be in this disposition of heart and mind, they cannot be supposed to be true Gospel penitents, or to have a real regret for their past sins; they do not repent in reality, says St. Augustine, but only pretend to repent. *Non agitur, sed fingitur penitentia*; their

conversion is but a mere phantom, though outwardly attended with the most favourable appearances; for as the aforesaid holy doctor observes in his 54th epistle to Macedonius, where injustice is the case no forgiveness is to be had from God, and no benefit is to be received from the healing sacrament of penance without restitution, or the will and intention of it, when it is otherwise impracticable. Let me then, my brethren, re-echo these words of Jesus Christ in your ears and impress them deeply on your minds, *Render unto Cesar what belongs to Cesar*, and that without any considerable delay; for the longer restitution is deferred the more the sin of injustice increases, on account of the greater loss that the proprietor suffers in the interim for want of his property, and the greater length of time that the unjust possessor continues in the will and intention of wronging his neighbour. Let no false pretext, blind partiality, or mistaken regard for your children, friends or relations, induce you to risk your salvation by putting off this duty to the end of your life, and transmitting to your heirs and successors a burden, which, perhaps, they never will discharge, although the obligation of restitution descends and devolves along with the ill-gotten property to those who inherit it, when they know that it was unjustly acquired and unjustly bequeathed. Is it not better, my brethren, to leave your children and friends a little, with the fear of God, than to expose them to the danger of losing their souls by leaving them an ill-acquired property, which they cannot keep without entailing damnation on themselves? In fine, is it not more eligible to live contented with what you can acquire by honest industry, be it ever so little, than to forfeit a happy eternity for the sake of the perishable goods of this transitory life, which are only valuable so far as they are conducive to eternal salvation? What, alas! will it avail a man to possess all the pearls of India, all the diamonds in the sea, all the gold mines of Peru, and all the treasures of the universe, if in the end he loses his immortal soul? Is it not an undoubted truth that riches are attended with many dangers, and commonly made instrumental to pride, vanity, luxury and a multiplicity of other sins? There are, indeed, rich men to be found, who make good use of their riches to God's honour and the good of their neighbour; but they are so generally abused and made subservient to vice, that the Gospel denounces a dreadful *wo to the rich*, Luke, c. vi. v. 24, and assures us that *it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven*, Mat. c. xix. v. 24. The poor man, whose time and thoughts are constantly employed and taken up with his toil and daily labour, stands fairer for a happy eternity hereafter, than he whose fortune enables him to gratify his passions, and wanton in all the pleasures and delights of nature. Hence, the poverty and sores of a miserable Lazarus, supported with patience, conveyed him to the bosom of Abraham in Para-

dise, whilst the wealth and treasures of the rich glutton, squandered in riot and feasting sumptuously, plunged him into hell for all eternity.

Beware then, my brethren, of the dangerous sin of covetousness and of its wicked offspring, injustice. Practice the salutary advice of the great Augustine, *Redde pecuniam, perde pecuniam, ne perdas animam*; restore that money which does not belong to you, and if it be necessary, even lose that money which does not belong to you, that you may not lose your soul which belongs to God, and which was redeemed with the precious blood of his beloved Son. If, notwithstanding all your industry, you are not as rich as some of your neighbours, you are not to envy them, but to be resigned to the blessed will of divine Providence, which orders all things for the better; if you do not make as rapid a fortune as they do, you should comfort yourselves with the pleasing reflection, that you renounce a short perishable gain for conscience sake and for the love of your God, who has promised to reward the just and faithful servant hereafter with incorruptible riches and immortal glory in the kingdom of Heaven. O Father of Mercies and giver of all good gifts, renew among thy people that spirit of justice and equity which is the true characteristic of Christianity; preserve us from a covetous worldly spirit which has no bounds; give us grace to moderate the desires of our hearts, and to live soberly, justly and piously in this world, that the transitory goods of this life may never make us forget the permanent and everlasting riches of thy glory, which thou hast prepared in the kingdom of Heaven for those who love and serve thee faithfully here on earth; and which I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Death.

Domine, filia mea modò defuncta est, sed veni, impone manum tuam super eam et vivet.

Mat. c. ix. v. 18.

Lord, my daughter is just now dead, but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she will live.

Mat. c. ix. v. 18.

THE holy Scripture frequently exhibits the weakness and misery of mankind, under various types and figures, and the Church zealously exhorts us to reflect on those emblems, as so many motives to awaken our faith and put a stop to our fol-

lits. In this day's Gospel we read two miracles wrought by our Blessed Saviour, one in favour of a woman who for twelve years had been troubled with an inveterate distemper, and was cured in an instant by touching the hem of his garment; the other in favour of the daughter of a Ruler of the Synagogue, who told him that his daughter was dead. That this will be the end of every one of us in a few years, is a truth too manifest for a proof. Ages and generations glide away with all their noise and splendor, and roll down the stream of time into the immense ocean and abyss of eternity. Our days pass over without interruption, and the fleeting moments constantly fly from us never more to return. Each instant we approach our last end, and every step we take brings us nearer to the grave. The extent of our existence in this world is but a span, and the frame of our body is so slenderly put together, that it is only one degree from putrefaction. Our sentence is already pronounced, and the execution of it is only deferred for a short time, perhaps much shorter than we imagine. The sentence is general. The sinner and the saint, the rich and the poor must all die, and there is no privilege or distinction to shield them from the fatal stroke. We are all convinced of this, and yet where is the preparation? If indeed by forgetting death, we could make death forget us, there might be some excuse for our negligence; but as we know by experience that it steals upon us unforeseen, and that thousands are snatched away like the dying worldling mentioned in St. Luke, c. xx. at the very time they flatter themselves with the expectation of many years enjoyment of their worldly goods and pleasures, we should frequently make death the subject of our serious consideration, in order to prevent the horrors of an unhappy death, and dispose our souls efficaciously for a happy removal from this vale of tears. I own, there is nothing more melancholy, or more shocking to nature, than the consideration of being obnoxious to such a change. However, as death is inevitable, and as its consequences are eternal and irreparable, what is it we should consider, if it be not a matter of such importance, on which our eternal happiness or misery depends? Must we not be void of reason and religion, if we do not think seriously of dying happily, and preparing ourselves with the utmost diligence to sanctify our last moments by a virtuous life? As we came into the world for nothing else but to provide for a happy eternity, by loving and serving the Lord our God, should we not conclude that we came into the world for nothing else but to learn to die well; a good and happy death being the way to a happy eternity? Seneca himself says, that true philosophy consists in a frequent consideration of death; and St. Augustine tells us, that as sin was the cause of death, so in like manner death is a remedy against sin. *If in all our works we reflected seriously on our last end*, as the wise man recommends, Eccles. c. vii. v. 10, if we made this the rule and standard of

our actions, and considered attentively that the very moment the breath leaves the body, there follows a judgment which decides our misery or happiness for all eternity, *we would never sin*, nor die miserably, as death in this case would be a sovereign preservative from sin and a powerful incentive to virtue. Permit me, then, to engage your attention with the thoughts of death, and to point out the salutary effects that a frequent and serious consideration of it is productive of. The just man, who is always mindful of death, stands prepared for the awful moment, meets it with confidence and smiles on its approach. The dying worldling, on the contrary, who lives as if he was never to die, is filled with anguish, terrors, apprehensions and remorse. The consolations and advantages of the one; the fears, alarms and perplexities of the other. Behold the entire subject of the following discourse. Let us, as usual, implore the divine aid through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. *Ave Maria.*

Nothing is more certain than that we must all die, though nothing is more uncertain than the hour and manner of our death, and the tenor of the sentence we shall then meet with. The day will infallibly come, and God only can tell how soon, when we shall never more see the night. And the night will come when we shall never more see the ensuing morning. What is become of all the famous heroes of antiquity, and of all the mighty monarchs and celebrated beauties, who heretofore made such a noise and figure on the theatre of the world? Their dust lies blended with the common earth, and few or none now think of them, or even know that they were ever in being. No sooner did they breathe their last breath, but they became pale, stiff, loathsome, hideous and putrid. Scarce one of their dearest friends could endure to watch them a single night, and their nearest relations were the first to turn their dead bodies out of doors, and to lay them deep under ground lest they should infect the air. All the esteem and applause which they acquired in the world was not able to procure them a moment's satisfaction in the grave, where they found no other inheritance, no other ornaments or diet than indigence, worms and infection. Just so will it be with us in a few years. We shall be wrapped up in a shroud, nailed up in a narrow coffin, carried to the grave, confined to five or six feet of earth and laid under a cold stone, to be eaten up by worms, to be reduced to a handful of dust and ashes, to be trampled upon by future generations, and to be no more thought of than if we never had existed. We are all hastening to that critical period as fast as the wings of time can carry us, and when we have once arrived at it, and set our foot within the gates of eternity, there is no coming back. That very instant the misery or felicity of man is decided for ever and ever; and if it be a miserable eternity into which he has stept, there is no remedy, no redemption. This is what renders death so awful. If we die well, our hap-

process is spread for the whole length of eternity; if we die it is dismal, miserable and unhappy without end, as long as God will be God. It is in this light we should consider death as connected with our eternal happiness or misery; and since this is a matter of infinite consequence, it is our interest as well as our duty to think frequently and seriously of it, and to make the thoughts of it the rule of our conduct. St. Jerome remarks, that a frequent consideration of death is a powerful means to wean our affections from the world, and to make us seek that real and permanent happiness above, which is not to be found here below on earth. Nothing exposes more clearly to our view the instability and vanity of all sublunary things; nothing is more capable of pulling down the pride of man; and keeping him within the bounds of Christian humility. It contributes very much to check the violence of his passions and to curb his vicious inclinations. It sets him above the power of the delusive charms of the world, and disengages his heart from all immoderate attachment to its perishable riches, empty pleasures and transitory enjoyments. In short, it animates him to the practice of those duties which God commands and religion prescribes.

The very Pagans themselves were taught by the light of nature, the utility and good effects of thinking frequently of their mortality, and contracting a kind of familiarity with death. Profane history informs us, that the remembrance of death was one of the principal circumstances of their most solemn pomp, and that they deemed it a religious duty to preserve the ashes of their ancestors in urns, in order to be constantly reminded thereby that they were mortal men. The Romans in their triumphs, the Grecians in the coronation of their Emperors, and the Egyptians in their public feasts, made use of certain striking emblems of human mortality, lest the honours and dignities to which they were exalted, and the banquets to which their guests were invited should make them forget that they were mortal men, or cause them to fall into any criminal excesses. It is related also of some Christian Emperors and Princes, that for the same purpose they had a representation of death placed constantly in their palaces before their eyes in the midst of their most valuable furniture, and that they ordered their pages to greet them every day with this salutation: *Memento mori; Remember you are to die.* It is still usual at the coronation of every new Pope, to burn a little stubble or flax to ashes in his presence, one of the attendants saying at the same time: *Thus, holy Father, the glory of the world passes away,* in order to remind him that the Papal dignity does not exempt him from being tributary to death. In like manner in the sacred ceremonies of Ash-Wednesday, the Church is accustomed to remind her children of their mortality, in the memorable words which the Almighty made use of when he pronounced sentence of death against our first parents, after their fall from the happy state of

their original innocence : *Remember, man, thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.* O that we made it our study to turn this great truth frequently in our thoughts ; what happy fruits would it be productive of ? Did we but lay out even one day in the month, as spiritual writers earnestly recommend, for meditating seriously on death, and for working ourselves into the dispositions, that we would willingly die in, and appear before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge, what conversions, what a change and reformation would we behold in the morals and conduct of Christians ? But, alas ! they seldom think of death until death comes to seize on them, and *then men generally die as they live*, as St. Augustine observes.

Happy they who are ever watching and continually preparing for this hour by a virtuous life, this being the only security against a sudden and unprovided death ! Happy the man who lives every day as if it were to be his last ; *it shall be well with him at the last hour, and he shall be blessed in his death.* Unhappy on the other hand are they, who defer their preparation to their death-bed, and put the issue of a never-ending eternity upon the poor chance of a late repentance, when the dulness and stupidity caused by their last illness, scarce allow of any serious application of their thoughts to the most important of all their concerns ! Unhappy the dying worldling who, bent only on enjoying the comforts and pleasures of this life, lives with little or no sense of God and of eternity ! Is it to be admired that the approaches of death should be so terrible to him, and that he should be strangely apprehensive of its coming ? O what a wide difference is there between his death and the death of the just man, who passes from time to eternity crowned with merit and surrounded with virtue ? *The death of the sinner*, who having spent his life in the pursuit of worldly vanities, has no other offerings at the last hour to present to his angry Judge, than what he has extracted from his crimes and iniquities, is indeed *a most dreadful evil*, as the Royal Prophet says, Ps. xxiii. v. 22. His mirth and jollities are then come to their fatal period, and his eyes are taking an everlasting farewell of all the fond objects of his passions. This horrible divorce and separation makes him shudder in the most bitter anguish and grief whilst he beholds himself violently torn from all he possesses and enjoys, even from his very body which he loved too well. The Pagan philosopher considered this only, *what he defined death the King of Terrors, and of all terrible things that which is the most dreadful.* But what is more alarming than this separation is, that all the former notions of the dying worldling are overturned in this awful moment ; an entire new scene is opened to him, and he begins to see things in a different point of view from what he did before. His conscience is a confused chaos ; a thousand perplexing thoughts disturb him ; his habits of spiritual sloth grow stronger than ever ; he opens his eyes, and sees that riches and honours which he so eagerly pursued,

were mere illusions, and that his former pleasures were no better than dreams and shadows which passed in a moment, and left but a cruel sting behind them that he is not able to stifle. He now beholds the treacherous world forsaking him in the day of his distress, and the prospect of the abyss of eternal misery which discloses itself by degrees, fills his mind with alarms and terrors that no tongue can express. If he dies insensible, as often happens to those who forget God in their health, his situation is the more desperate and deplorable, because the instant that his miserable soul leaves his body in the state of mortal sin unrepented, she is irretrievably lost, and sentenced to burn in unquenchable flames. She is abandoned by God and his Angels, and given over a prey to merciless devils, who insulting her may be supposed to cry out; Let men on earth crown the carcass of this sinner with pompous monuments, epitaphs, elegies and panegyrics, his soul is our victim now, as his body will also be after the general judgment.

All these objects, which appear so frightful to the dying worldling at his last hour, are real motives of joy and springs of spiritual consolation to the just man at the approach of death; for if he reflects on the world, which he is going to forsake, he considers it as a tempestuous sea, filled with rocks and quicksands; he looks on it as a place of banishment and a vale of misery, where man is engaged in a continual warfare, surrounded by a thousand enemies, constantly exposed to danger, and every moment liable to perish. Instead of being deceived like the sinful worldling, by false appearances, he beholds the tempting allurements, fawning pleasures and transitory riches of the world, as nothing else but *mere vanity and affliction of spirit*, as Solomon declared from the throne. He regards its enjoyments as insignificant trifles, painted toys and empty bubbles, which their admirers no sooner offer to lay hold of, but they dissolve into air. *They have slept out their sleep, says the Royal Prophet, and when they awoke they found nothing in their hands of all those things which in their dream they seemed to possess.* This is a true description of the vanity of worldly enjoyments, which only bring with them a momentary satisfaction, and are quickly followed by perplexing cares, apprehensions and remorse. The just man being well convinced of this truth, wishes to be rescued from the dangerous snares and embarrassments of this mortal life; he longs, like St. Paul, to be disengaged from the prison of the flesh, and desires in the secret of his heart the disunion of his soul and body, as the only way to a real and lasting happiness. He considers with great tranquillity and composure of mind, the passage which he is going to make out of the world, as a happy deliverance from his pilgrimage. He looks upon himself here on earth as an exile, solicitous to return to his native country, as a traveller hastening to the end of his journey, as a captive impatient to be freed from his chains and to be released from his bondage. Blessed with these

Christian sentiments, the hour of death is welcome to him, and consummates all his wishes. He forsakes without regret what he possessed in the world, as if he did not possess it, and what he made use of, as if he did not use it, according to the expression of the Apostle.

Death, on the contrary, appears terrible to the dying worldling. The strong and criminal friendship which he contracted with the world, makes him unwilling to part it; for, as St. Augustine observes, a person does not part without regret what he sets his heart upon. Dazzled with the glittering shew of the vanities of this life, he places in it all his felicity, and if it depended upon him, his entire hopes and expectations would be centred on this side of the grave. Is it then to be admired, that when death shall force and violently tear him away from the enjoyment of these imaginary pleasures, his heart should be agitated with strange convulsions; and that the bitterness of his soul should be equal to the avarice of his mind? Is it to be wondered at, that he should cry out with the impious King mentioned in Holy Writ, *Is it thus, cruel death, that you make so bitter a separation?* Is it thus that you rob me of what I esteemed most valuable and charming in life? O what anguish, what confusion, what dreadful temptations of despair will then arise? Whatever way the dying worldling turns himself to seek for ease or comfort, he can find none. Before his eyes he beholds an innumerable multitude of horrid oaths, curses, blasphemies, criminal excesses, and other grievous sins, which stare him in the face with all their deformity. If he looks back into his past life, he finds the good works he has done too inconsiderable when balanced with his multiplied crimes. The remembrance of the graces, invitations and calls of Heaven, which he resisted; the many opportunities of storing up eternal treasures, which he neglected; the talents and gracious gifts of God which he misemployed, the precious time that he squandered away, the holy sacraments which he abused, set before his eyes such a dismal scene of wo, distress and confusion, that he now experiences the truth of these words of the Royal Prophet, Ps. cxiv. *The sorrows of death have encompassed me, and the perils of hell have found me.* His very prayers fly in his face, and upbraid him with sloth and negligence. The sight of every thing about him, his wife, his children, his friends, his worldly substance, which he loved more than his God, serve now but to increase his anguish, and what still adds misery to misery, the pains and agonies of his sickness gave him little or no leisure or ability to apply himself seriously to the great work of a perfect conversion to God. But the just man will have nothing of this to fear at the hour of his death, because he never fixed his happiness on worldly trifles, but raising his heart to God, was always faithful to his divine law, and from thence proceeds another motive of consolation; for there is no earthly pleasure comparable to the peace and serenity of a virtuous

Christian standing on the verge of life, and ready to meet death with the testimony of a good conscience, and the well-grounded hopes of *entering into the joys of his Lord*. It is in this last scene that he is enlivened and consoled, by the strong faith and confidence he has in the goodness and mercies of his heavenly Father, and in the infinite merits of Jesus Christ his Redeemer. The assurance of a well-spent life, the price and merit of those virtues which his humility suppressed and concealed from the eyes of men ; the multitude of good works which triumphantly surround him ; the perfect conformity to the will of God, and other happy dispositions with which he closes his eyes and yields up his soul into his Creator's hands, make him cheerfully take his leave of this world, and welcome the happy hour that is to put an end to his labours and unite him to his God. O what satisfaction is it to him, to see himself drawing nigh the gates of heavenly Jerusalem, and upon the point of being admitted into the eternal mansions of glory, and associated to the blessed choirs of Angels and Saints? Having before him this bright prospect, he considers the pangs of death and the pains of his dissolution to be nothing else but the breaking down of that partition which stands betwixt his soul and the sight of that Supreme Being, which is going to manifest itself to him in the fulness of joy, and whose particular providence supports and protects the just man under the shadow of its wings, at the critical hour of death ; so that they may say with the Psalmist, Ps. xxii. *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou, O Lord, art with me ; and again, I rejoice at the things that are said to me, we shall go into the house of the Lord*, Ps. cxxi. *Blessed then are they who thus die in the Lord, for their works shall follow them*, says St. John in the Apocalypse, c. xiv. On the other hand, nothing can be conceived more wretched, more dismal or more deplorable than the death of the wicked, who, ready to be cited before the awful tribunal of an injured God, have nothing to offer him but a long train of crimes and disorders. They see themselves just launching forth into eternity with all their iniquities, and with the just apprehensions of what shall follow after their death. The malice and deformity of their sins, which the subtlety of their self-love industriously disguised before, will then be set before their eyes in a true light. The crimes, which before seemed but small faults, by reason of an inveterate habit contracted in vice, will then appear depicted in the blackest die, and prey on their conscience like so many gnawing worms. They will accompany them at their departure out of this world, and, as the Scripture says, *they will sleep with them in the grave*. Is there no means of salvation therefore left for them at their dying hour? God indeed may shew mercy to them at the last gasp, for which reason we are not to form a rash judgment, nor pass sentence on any particular sinner ; but is it credible that sinners who abuse God's mercy, and tempt him by designing

to live in sin and then to die in grace, after glutting themselves with worldly delights, should snatch Heaven in a moment, which the best Christians with difficulty do in many years? How can they expect to be favoured at their death with an extraordinary miracle of grace, whose life earned nothing but anger, and who sacrificed the principal part of it to the service of the devil and to the gratification of their brutish appetites? How can their conversion be deemed sincere, who resolve only to abandon their criminal pleasures when they can enjoy them no more, and to cease to sin when the ability of sinning is taken from them? However, if a sinner be so unfortunate as to have his repentance to begin at the end of his life, he is not to despair, but should do all that is then in his power, and endeavour to bewail his sins in the bitterness of his soul, begging mercy and pardon for the sake of Jesus Christ. A man who is in danger of being drowned, ought to lay hold of a twig or a bulrush, in order to effect his escape, if he can. But as it would be madness to plunge himself into a whirlpool, because there is a bulrush or a twig at the water edge that he may lay hold of, so in like manner, it is the height of madness for a sinner to leave the concern of dying well to the hazard of the last hour, or to venture his eternal salvation on so desperate an issue as a death-bed repentance. The only time you can depend on, my brethren, is the present time, whilst you are in health, and capable of having recourse to the throne of grace with the necessary dispositions. If you sincerely wish to die the death of the just, and finish your days in peace with God, begin without further delay to live the life of the just, and to spend the remainder of your days in the service of God. Remember your last end, and be ever watchful and always *prepared, because you know not the day nor the hour*, as our Lord says in the Gospel. *Latet ultimus dies, ut observentur omnes dies.* The last day is concealed from us, says St. Augustine, that we may watch every day, and not be surprized by death, which comes like a thief at midnight, when least expected, Matt. c. xxiv. O merciful Jesus, who neither in life nor in death forsake those who put their trust and confidence in thee, grant that we may live in thy grace and die in thy favour. Preserve us from setting our affections on this sinful Babylon, and enable us to break through all difficulties that oppose our passage to a happy eternity. O may thy sacred name be the last accent of our tongue, the last motion of our heart, the last sigh of our soul, that whenever we depart this life, we may, through thy merits, be admitted into the mansions of everlasting bliss; which, my brethren, I wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

TWENTY-FOURTH AND LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the vile Sin of Impurity.

Cum videritis abominationem desolationis stantem in loco sancto—qui legit intelligat.

Mat. c. xxi. v. 15.

When ye shall see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, he that reads let him understand.

Mat. c. xxiv. v. 15.

ALTHOUGH this sacred text is literally understood of the profanation and destruction of the beautiful temple of Jerusalem, yet it may be justly applied, in a moral sense, to the abomination of desolation that the base vice and odious sin of impurity brings into the holy place, and sets up in the soul of a Christian, which by baptism becomes the living temple of God and the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost, according to these words of the Apostle, *Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in ye?* 1 Cor. c. v. v. 16. Yes, my brethren, such is the dignity, such is the happiness of a Christian as long as he preserves the grace, and lives up to the character of his baptism; but the instant he profanes and defiles his soul and body with the vile sin of impurity, he ceases to be the temple of God, and becomes a sink of filth and abomination, and a receptacle or dwelling-place of the devil. St. Gregory the Great remarks, that there are different sorts of devils, and that they have their distinct appellations, this difference arising from the different kinds of sins into which they endeavour to draw poor deluded sinners. There are devils of pride, devils of avarice, devils of lechery, of anger, of gluttony, of envy, of jealousy, of illusion and error, and each of them has his particular character as well as his proper function. The devil of lust, or the impure and unclean devil, is called *Asmodeus*, and his principal study is to get possession of the sinner's heart, and to infect it with the contagion of sensual and carnal pleasures. His malice is such, that if he happens to be dislodged and expelled by means of a sincere repentance, he meditates a speedy return, and sets all his engines at work to procure admittance again, according to these words of the

Gospel: *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he finds no rest or ease till he returns to his former abode, and he brings seven other devils along with him to take up their dwelling place in the unhappy sinner's soul*; Luke, c. xi. v. 24. O how deplorable must the state of that soul be which is thus converted into a receptacle of so many infernal spirits? How odious and detestable must it appear in the sight of a God of infinite sanctity? Nothing can be more opposite to the purity and spirituality of his nature; nothing can remove a Christian at a greater distance from him, whom none but the pure *and the clean of heart shall see*, Mat. c. v. v. 8. May I not, then, justly call the sin of impurity an *abomination of desolation*, since it is so in reality both in its own nature and effects, as it renders the sinner odious and abominable in the eyes of God, and reduces him to the most miserable of all states? No crime enslaves him more, or involves him in greater misfortunes; no crime is more shameful, more productive of fatal disorders, or forms in the heart a more insupportable sting and remorse of conscience. In short, it is one of the seven capital sins, one of the greatest obstacles of salvation, the seminary of all vices, the poisonous source of numberless evils, and the general cause of the eternal damnation of thousands. To inspire you, therefore, with all the hatred and abhorrence that this foul and destructive monster deserves, and to arm you against its most dangerous influences, is the design of the following discourse, wherein I shall first lay before you its enormous malignity; and secondly, its most effectual remedies and preservatives. Purify our hearts, O Divine Spirit, and cleanse my tongue and lips, as thou didst heretofore cleanse the lips of the Prophet Isaias, that I may expatiate on this subject to thy honour and glory, and to the edification of thy servants assembled here in thy name. Obtain for us this favour, O immaculate mother of Jesus; it is what we humbly request, through thy intercession, greeting thee in the words of the Angel. *Ave Maria.*

Of all the crimes that the unhappy children of Adam are prone to, lust or impurity is the most pernicious and destructive to man, and the most filthy, the most odious and detestable in the sight of God. Its crying malice appears evidently from the hatred and abhorrence which the Almighty has frequently testified against it, and from the many severe and visible scourges with which he has in his wrath punished it even in this life, and the still greater punishments which he has denounced against it in the next life. There is no crime that the sacred Scripture gives us a more frightful idea of; no crime that it declares to be more injurious to God, more dishonourable to man, or more deserving of the vengeance and thunderbolts of Heaven. As soon as this foul monster appeared on earth, to shew how odious and abominable it was in the eyes of God, the Scripture makes use of the strongest figures of speech, and says that God, whose nature is incapable of

grief, or repentance, or any other passion, was grieved to the heart, and even repented that he had created man, Gen. c. vi. v. 5, 6. What a strange expression, and how strongly does it give us to understand the enormity of the sin of lust? We do not read that the Lord *was inwardly touched with sorrow of heart*, or shewed regret for having created the Angels or our first parents after their fall. We are not told that *he repented* after the murder of Abel committed by Cain, nor after the other crimes committed in the ages immediately ensuing the creation; but if it were possible, *he repented* as soon as the horrid sin of impurity forced its way into the world, and he resolved to destroy man from the face of the earth, nay, even the very beasts, the reptiles, and the souls of the air, which were made for the use and service of man. All flesh had corrupted its ways, and the sin of impurity had become so general, that the earth was defiled with wickedness. In order, therefore, to cleanse it from such abominations, the Lord sent the waters of the universal deluge, wherein all mankind, without distinction of age or sex, were swallowed up and drowned, except eight just persons, who were saved in Noah's Ark for re-peopling a better world.

It was also the heinous crime of impurity, that drew down from the Heavens dreadful showers of fire and sulphur, to burn all the inhabitants of five cities alive, and to reduce the neighbouring country into ashes. They had given themselves up to sins of impurity, and the malice of their crimes was so enormous, that, as the Scripture says, *it cried to Heaven for vengeance*, Gen. xviii. In consequence of which the Almighty, to shew his detestation of their wickedness, rained down fire and brimstone upon them, overthrew their cities, and destroyed their country, which before was *like a Paradise*, Gen. c. xiii. but was then turned into a lake of stinking water, and remains to this day, for all posterity, a standing and eternal monument of God's aversion to the vile sin of impurity and uncleanness. We read another instance hereof in the Book of Genesis, where it is related, that Onan, having defiled the marriage-bed by a sin of lust, was immediately struck dead, *because he had done a detestable thing*, c. xxxviii. v. 9, 10. The Book of Numbers likewise informs us, that no less than twenty-four thousand persons were put to death at one time, by the express command of God, in punishment of this odious sin, c. xxv. v. 9. These and several other visible judgments of this sort, recorded in Holy Writ, are convincing proofs of the enormity of the sin of impurity, and sufficiently shew how abominable it must be in itself, and how detestable in the eyes of God, whose infinite justice never punishes a sin more than it deserves, and whose infinite mercy generally punishes it less than it deserves, especially in this world, where *the works and effects of his mercy to his creatures, are above all his other works*, and surpass the effects of his justice as

the Heavens surpass the mountains in height, according to the comparison of the Royal Prophet.

The punishment that the divine justice inflicts on the sin of impurity in the next life, are severe and dreadful beyond measure, inasmuch that all the chastisements of this life are but feeble representations and shadows of the woful torrent of wrath, indignation, and vengeance, that the Almighty threatens to pour down hereafter upon the criminal heads of the effeminate, the impure and the unclean. God himself will be the judge of fornicators and adulterers, says St. Paul, Heb. c. xiii. v. 4, and it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. c. x. v. 31; and again, they shall not possess the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. c. vi. v. 9. They have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, Ephes. c. v. v. 5. They shall not obtain the kingdom of God, Galat. c. v. v. 19, 21. They shall be reserved unto the day of judgment to be tormented, says St. Peter, 2 Ep. c. ii. v. 9, 10. They shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, says St. John, Apoc. c. xxi. v. 8. where they shall have their degree of torments measured out to them, with the most exact proportion to the number and grievousness of the works of the flesh which they have been guilty of in the course of their life, according to these words of the Scripture, *As much as he (the sinner) has been in delight, so much torment let him suffer.* Their torments, in short, may be reduced to these two general heads, which are called by divines *the pain of loss* and *the pain of sense*, that is, they are to be eternally separated from God, and to be eternally environed with unquenchable flames, according to this sentence which the Sovereign Judge is to pronounce on the last day: *Depart from me, ye accursed into everlasting fire.* These two pains, which comprize all their other sufferings, correspond to the two great evils that attend the sin of lust, one of which is an insolent contempt of the Creator, and the other a passionate, blind, inordinate love of the creature. The pain of loss answers the contempt of the Creator, which the impure sinner is guilty of in preferring a created object to his Supreme Majesty, it being just that they who voluntarily turn their backs on the Lord their God, and abandon him first, should in their turn be abandoned by him, and should lose him and be banished out of his sight for ever. The pain of sense, whereby the bodies and senses of impure sinners are to be tormented, answers the inordinate love of the creature, and is inflicted in punishment of the sensual pleasure that impure sinners take in unlawful enjoyments and gratifications, it being just that the senses, which place their last end and happiness in created objects and in things prohibited by the law of God, should pay for the delights which they taste in committing sin.

If we consult the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, they will tell us that the sin of impurity is so grievous in its own

venomate nature, that it may be compared to a venomous serpent, which no sooner wounds than it conveys its deadly poison and kills the soul in an instant. Against most of the other commandments of God's Law, the transgression may sometimes be venial on account of the smallness of the matter; but every thing is generally deemed mortal and damnable that is committed with a full and deliberate consent in matter of impurity. The very desire, without effect, is looked upon as no less criminal than the action itself, according to these words of our Saviour: *Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart*, Matt. c. v. v. 28. St. Remigius says, that this sin brings in a more plentiful harvest to the devil, and sends more souls to hell-fire, than all the other sins put together. St. Augustine, Solil. c. 19, says it may be justly compared to the tail of the dragon mentioned in the Apocalypse, c. xii. which swept away the third part of the stars of Heaven. Holy Job calls it the *greatest iniquity and a fire devouring even unto perdition, and pulling up all by the roots*, c. xxxi. v. 11, 12; because it consumes the root of every virtue, dries up the sources of grace, destroys the fruits of a good education, and cancels at once the merits of several years.

Its effects are many, fatal and deplorable; it is the bane of every virtue and the fountener of every vice, it corrupts the heart, perverts the will, stupifies the mind, blinds the understanding, eclipses the faculty of reason, sullies the imagination, infects the senses, defiles the body, impairs the health, defaces the image of God in the soul, and degrades man into the similitude and resemblance of a brute beast, as the Royal Prophet speaks, Ps. xlviii. It makes him insensible to all that is noble and generous; or that regards God and his eternal salvation; for, as the Apostle says, *the carnal man does not perceive the things that are of God*, 1 Cor. c. ii. v. 14. He has no relish for spiritual things or for the truths of eternity, no taste for hearing sermons or exhortations, no devotion for prayer, no piety for approaching the holy sacraments, no desire for assisting at the divine sacrifice of the mass. Being immersed in flesh and blood, and totally bent on the pursuit of brutal pleasures, he forgets his Creator, he lays aside all tenderness of conscience, he loses sight of his faith and religion, he is gradually led from one grievous sin into another, and if he once becomes a slave to the vice of impurity, he blindly falls into such infamous disorders, and is so strangely insatuated, that there is scarce any hope left of his conversion. No example can be more striking than that of Solomon, who no sooner became a slave to this detestable sin than he fell into the grossest errors, and offered incense to false gods with the same hand that raised the Temple of Jerusalem. He blindly adored idols of gold and silver, because he had previously adored idols of flesh and blood. This is what darkened all the lights of his wisdom, and sapped the

very foundation of his faith and religion. Without going so far back, what was the origin of the apostacies and heresies that sprung up in Germany and France about two centuries ago? Did they not proceed from the bosom of corruption? What gave birth to the new gospel of Luther and Calvin, but the horrid vice of lust? So true it is, that this crime bewitches the sinner, and occasions him to stop at nothing in order to gratify his vile passion. He falls almost at every step he goes, until at length his conscience is scared, and as St. Bernard speaks, becomes a bottomless abyss of iniquity. It is true, indeed, he is not entirely exempted from the strings and lashes of a guilty conscience, for this sin usually leaves behind it such shame and confusion, horror and despair, trouble and agitation, as render an impure heart an image of hell, an anticipated damnation on earth; which made St. Bernard say, that a burning fire, a corroding worm, and the stench of sulphur, are the usual attendants of impurity; but it captivates those who are habituated to it, in so strange a manner, that it often leads them to final impenitence, without feeling any lasting impression from the most terrifying truths of the Gospel; for they grow at length in love with their slavery, and have not courage or resolution enough to break the chains with which they are fettered, or shake off the heavy yoke that galls and torments them without intermission. They scarce entertain a serious thought of returning to God, but continue still filling up the measure of their iniquities, and treasuring up wrath for themselves against the bitter day of wrath, as if a mark of reprobation was set upon them, and they were, as St. Paul speaks, Rom. c. i. v. 28, *delivered up to a reprobate sense*, like the sinner of whom the Royal Prophet says, *The sinner has exasperated the Lord, and in the severity of his anger he looks not after him*, Ps. x. v. 15.

Such, my brethren, are the fatal effects of the vice of impurity, and such is the hatred that the Almighty God bears unto all the different species of it. St. Paul forbids Christians even to name it in their conversation, Ephes. c. v. v. 3. Their bodies are not their own, but belong to God, and are destined, as well as their souls, to partake one day of his glorious immortality. They are the members of Jesus Christ, who *bought them with a great price*, as the Apostle says, 1 Cor. c. vi. v. 18, 19. By virtue of his incarnation they contract a strict alliance with him, and are, in a special manner, obliged to a great purity both of soul and body. They are purified by the salutary waters of baptism, washed in the blood of the immaculate Lamb, consecrated with the holy unction in the Sacrament of Confirmation, nourished with the blessed Eucharist, and sanctified like so many tabernacles by the real presence of Christ. What a grievous injury do they not therefore offer to him, when they debase and defile themselves with impurity? What a black ingratitude must it be in them

to dishonour and pollute his members, and render them *members of ignominy*? What a horrid crime to profane and *violate his temple* and dwelling-place? It is herein that the Apostle chiefly constitutes the enormity any crying malice of this sin; and it is for this reason that he assures us, that *God will destroy those who violate his temple*, 1 Cor. c. iii. v. 16.

In the primitive ages of Christianity, this crime in a Christian was considered as a kind of sacrilege highly injurious to the incarnation of the Son of God, and was punished by the canons of the Church, then in force, with a penitential fast of several years on bread and water, like unto the sins of murder and idolatry, because it partakes of the malice of both the one and the other; for if the murderer destroys a creature made after God's image, the lecher renews the passion of Jesus Christ and re-crucifies him, as the Apostle expresses it. If the idolater offers incense to a false and imaginary God, the lecherous and lascivious Christian sacrifices to the favourite object of his passion all that is dear to him on earth, his worldly substance, his rest, his health, his conscience. He does not, indeed, adore a statue of wood, of stone, or of metal, says Tertullian, but he adores and worships an idol of flesh and blood, a corruptible worm of the earth, a heap of dust and ashes. He does not immolate the flesh of sheep or of oxen to it, but he immolates his own immortal soul, and that for the sake of a filthy pleasure and a momentary delight. He does not offer incense or perfumes to any inanimate creature, but he devotes his thoughts, his affections, his words, his services, to the accomplice of his iniquity, whom he idolizes on the altar of his heart, and to whom he blindly pays the homage that is due to the living God. But let us briefly consider the remedies against this horrid and abominable crime.

The most effectual remedies and best preservatives against the detestable vice of lechery are, first, an humble diffidence in yourselves, and a strong confidence in God; the one will make you keep at a distance from the danger, and carefully shun and remove all the immediate occasions of sin to the best of your power. The other will excite you to have frequent recourse to fervent prayer, and to apply for the aid of divine grace, that it may support your weakness in the day of battle, and enable you to combat and overcome the temptations and assaults of the enemies of your salvation, which you have it not in your power to shun by flight. There is no temptation so strong or so violent, but we may conquer it with the help of God, if, conscious of our own frailty and insufficiency, we put our whole trust in him, earnestly implore his protection, and faithfully correspond with his grace, as the Apostle teaches, 1 Cor. c. x. On the contrary, if, depending too much on our own strength, knowledge, discretion and age, we throw ourselves without necessity in the way of temptation, and presumptuously seek or remain in the dangerous occasions of sin,

there is no temptation so weak or so small but may overcome us, and prove the cause of our spiritual ruin in the end. Without humility, purity and chastity will not be maintained any long time; for, by a just judgment the Lord withdraws his all-powerful hand from the haughty and the proud, and often suffers them to fall into the most shameful disorders in punishment of their pride, according to the Royal Prophet. *Humbasti sicut vulneratum superbum.* If you therefore wish to preserve an inviolable purity both of soul and body, be always humble in your own eyes. *If you stand, take care lest you fall,* says the Apostle. Never rely on your own virtue, wisdom or strength; but remember that, as St. Jerom observes, *you are not holier than King David, nor wiser than Solomon, nor stronger than Sampson.* Shun the danger; for, as the Scripture says, *he that loves the danger shall perish in it,* Eccles. c. iii. v. 27. *Cut off the hand and foot, pluck out the eye that scandalizes you and cast it away,* according to the rule prescribed by our Saviour, Matt. c. xviii. v. 9, that is, quit and renounce whatever is most agreeable and most dear to you on earth, if it be the cause of your spiritual ruin. Lay aside those amorous novels, comedies, romances and other impious books, which are so apt to effeminate the soul, to sully the imagination, to intoxicate the ideas, to inflame the passions, to kindle and nourish the fire of lust, and to instil its poison insensibly into the heart. Avoid those play-houses, those masquerades, those promiscuous dances, where the pomps and vanities of the devil and the world, which you renounced at your baptism, are set off with all their most dangerous allurements. Shun those places, those assemblies, those private interviews, where you have reason to dread that the devil of impurity lies in wait, in order to shoot his fiery darts at your heart and devour your soul. Keep up to the strict rules of Christian modesty, and be guarded against the soothing words of deluding flattery, and the snares of ill-designing persons. O, how many innocent souls make a shipwreck of their virtue for want of taking these precautions? How many have been trepanned into all the extravagancies of a disorderly life, though at first they would have sooner thrown themselves into the jaws of a lion, than consented to the crimes they afterwards committed without blushing or remorse? How many who lived only on the tears of penance and the bread of sorrow, have been seduced to fling themselves into the gulph of vice, and to forfeit the merits of fifty or sixty years by relying too much on their own innocence, age and prudence? Into what a frightful chaos, into what a dreadful precipice, did one glance of the eye plunge the innocent and Holy King David? He who had prayed to the Lord, Ps. cxxxviii. to examine his life and sound his heart, fell from his innocence by one unguarded look, and no sooner did he swallow the bait but he cried out, *that torrents of iniquity poured in upon him.*

This plainly shews how necessary it is to guard the outward senses, particularly the eyes and the ears; for, as these are, as it were, the windows of the soul, and the doors and avenues through which the death of sin usually enters and makes its way to the mind, if they be neglected and left open to every object and every indelicate discourse that invites and allures to sin, the heart will be exposed to the evident danger of being enslaved by its irregular inclinations, as a city is exposed to the danger of being easily subdued and compelled to surrender when the outworks are left unguarded, and the gates lie open at all hours for the enemy to enter in whenever he pleases. *Our life here on earth*, is called by holy Job, *a warfare*, c. vii. and we are stationed in this world as in a state of probation and a field of battle, environed on every side with enemies within and without, visible and invisible, always vigilant and never at rest. It is impossible to shun them all, and it would be rash to face and combat them all; so that, to fly the danger with prudence whenever we can, and to combat with courage whenever we can save ourselves by flight, is the great art of the spiritual warfare wherein we are engaged. Let a man be ever so just, he is still liable to fall during the course of his mortal life. Even the most virtuous are not entirely exempted from sensible impressions, as long as their souls are united to mortal bodies, and act by the ministry of the senses; for, as they are children of Adam, they must expect, more or less, to feel the sad effects of the deep wounds which his disobedience has inflicted on his offspring. This is what caused the great St. Paul to long to be disengaged from the prison of his body, and cry out, in his Epistle to the Romans, c. vii. *Unhappy man that I am! who will deliver me from the body of this death?* that is, from this mortal flesh with its sinful lusts. He perceived in himself, as he tells us, a kind of law, or impulse of depraved nature, *fighting against the law of his mind*, and he wished to be totally divested of it; but the Lord, who knows how to make our very infirmities contribute to our advantage, gave him to understand, that *divine grace was sufficient to protect him from danger, and that virtue increases and is perfected in weakness*.

Christians, indeed, are delivered at their baptism from the guilt of original sin and from the punishment due to it, by the sanctifying grace of Jesus Christ; but to be entirely delivered from all temptation to sin, is a privilege reserved for the life to come, when the happy change of our state will not only free us from sin, but likewise from every incentive and temptation to it. Until then concupiscence, which St. Augustine calls an incentive to sin, *fomes peccati*, as it inclines man to fix his heart on carnal pleasures, and to seek his happiness in the gratification of his senses, and in the enjoyment of riches, honours and dignities, is permitted to remain even in the just and the elect, for a trial of their fidelity, *ad agonem*. We may

fly from the devil and from the world, but we cannot fly from this domestic enemy, it being so closely interwoven with corrupt nature that nothing but death can totally destroy it. Like a weight, it presses mortals down towards the earth, and like a sickness it disturbs and agitates them, and puts them in danger of forfeiting life everlasting if they yield to its suggestions, and suffer their hearts to be seduced by its illusions. However, we have it in our power, with the assistance of God's grace, to weaken its influence, and to restrain it from doing us any mischief by resisting it properly, and putting an immediate stop to its very first motions. It is on the resistance and defence that we make, and the victory which we gain, that our salvation depends. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*, Apoc. c. ii. v. 10. And again, *Blessed is the man who suffers temptation, because when he shall be tried he shall receive a crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him*, James, c. i. v. 12. Above all things, we must watch and guard our heart, according to the following advice of the wise man, Prov. c. iv. v. 23. *My son, guard thy heart with all care and diligence*; for as all sin begins with a bad thought, and is bred in the heart before it breaks out into action, the most effectual way to overcome it is to suppress it in its very root, and to prevent the temptation from reaching the heart. If the heart once consents and yields to it, though it be but for a short time, the soul is defiled with sin, James, c. i. v. 15, but if the heart and the will make a vigorous resistance, and repel the evil suggestion the instant it presents itself to the imagination, the temptation, instead of being hurtful, becomes an occasion of merit, and affords a Christian an opportunity to entitle himself to a reward for having gained a victory over it. To insure success in this spiritual warfare, he is to reject the slightest idea and the least evil thought, with as much speed as he would throw off a burning coal; for otherwise, like unto a little fire or small spark that is not immediately extinguished in time, it may cause a great conflagration and blaze that will not be easily quenched, as St. Gregory observes. *Resist the devil*, says St. James, *and he will fly from you*, c. iv. v. 7. The monster must be stifled at his very birth, and smothered in the cradle, says St. Jerom; he must be attacked, combated and repelled in the beginning, whilst he is weak, and before he gets any footing, gains any ground, or has time to make himself master of the soul.

Fasting is another powerful remedy and sovereign preservative. This is the preservative that St. Jerom made use of in the desert, and recommended to others. We must, says he, quench the fiery darts of the devil by temperance and rigorous fasts, and herein fear not to prejudice your health, for it is better to have the body sick than the soul distempered. The heat of concupiscence is to be allayed by abstinence, and the fire of lust must be quenched by withdrawing whatever serves

like fuel to feed and foment the passions. Flesh and blood, are prone to rebellion, though tamed by abstinence and restrained by necessity, but they are much more mutinous when pampered with ease and fed with delicacies. It is to surfeiting, idleness and drunkenness, that the Prophet Ezechiel attributes all the criminal practices of the Sodomites, c. xvi. and that the Prophet Jeremy ascribes the adulteries of the Israelites, c. lvii. Drunkenness, says St. Ambrose, is the mother of all crimes and the shipwreck of chastity. Christ therefore cautions us, Luke, c. xxi. v. 34, *to take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.* He tells us also, Mat. c. xvii. v. 20, that the impure and unclean spirit is *one of that kind of devils which is not to be cast out but by prayer and fasting.* It was by fasting that the Pauls, the Antonies, the Hilarions, and numberless other saints, armed themselves against all the assaults and temptations of the devil, the world and the flesh. It was, in fine, by fasting that Christ our Lord prepared himself for combating against the devil in the desert. He had no occasion to fear the infection of the world, or the contagion of bad example. He neither had faults to expiate, nor passions to suppress, nor evil inclinations to destroy, nor even virtues to acquire. He was holiness itself. His godhead placed him in a region above sin, and impeccability was as inseparably annexed to his person as the divinity. But he was willing to give us his life as a model, as well as his blood for a ransom, and to leave us an example of every virtue we stood in need of. O merciful Lord, be thou our guide, our protector and safeguard, amidst all the snares and tempting allurements of this life. If thou be for us we have nothing to dread; what can our enemies do against us? And if thou ceaseest to support us, we fall into our original nothing. All our hope for mercy, grace and salvation, is in thee alone. We are the work of thy hands and the price of thy blood, O Jesus. Our souls and bodies are both thy creatures. Grant that nothing but sanctity and purity may dwell in them. Make us sensible that we have been made and redeemed for better things than to feed on the husks of swine, or wallow in the mire of unclean and brutal pleasures. *Create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within our bowels.* Thou knowest the many dangers to which our weakness is exposed on every side. We can scarce advance a step without meeting objects to dissipate us, vanities to blind us, perishable goods to seduce us, and emissaries of Satan to lead us astray. In the midst of so many dangers, what can we do but raise our feeble voice to the throne of thy grace, and say with thy Prophet, *Save us, O Lord, because we have no inheritance but misery and sin.* We are nothing but frail and brittle vessels of clay, which are easily shattered to pieces. Grant that, according to the advice of thy Apostle, we may be *sober and watchful against the assaults of the enemy, and offer our bodies to thee as*

an holy and immaculate host. O may the fire of thy divine love ever burn in our hearts, make us run with cheerfulness in the way of thy precepts, and dispose our souls for the inheritance of thy heavenly kingdom; which, my brethren, I sincerely wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SIXTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

On the Festival of St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra.

Lex Dei ejus in corde ipsius. — Psal. xxxvi. v. 33.

The Law of God was in his heart. — Psal. xxxvi. v. 33:

MEN, weak in their conceptions, and limited in their knowledge, cannot pretend to set forth the praises of the saints with that justice that is due to their merit, or to fathom the depth of the wonderful gifts and graces which the Almighty has been pleased to confer upon them. They often spend their breath in empty words, and hide the matter under borrowed ornaments, giving way more to the vanity of their own thoughts than to the dignity of the subject. It is not so when the Spirit of God bestows any encomium in the sacred Scriptures; he sees things as they are in themselves, expresses them as he sees them, and says a great deal in a little. And as he knows the point of glory upon which an illustrious life is founded, he places it as a principle from whence an instructive sketch of each particular consequence may be drawn. This is what I have remarked in the above-mentioned text, wherein the Word of God, after pointing out the several good qualities of a just man, sums up his whole character in an expression the most energetic, and an eulogium the most sublime: *The Law of God was in his heart.* Such was the spirit and character of St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, whose glorious memory we solemnize on this day. *The Law of God was in his heart,* and it sprouted up into all the different branches of the most exalted virtues; he took it for his guide, and made it the invariable rule of his conduct; it served him as a strong fence and security against all the snares of the devil, and the incentives of vice; it enlightened and directed his understanding and purified his heart; by it he discovered the infinite mercies and goodness of his Divine Redeemer, and was taught to endure with meekness the trials and contradictions he met with, and to con-

quer them by a Christian patience. He knew the Commandments of God and fulfilled them with pleasure. His faith, actuated by charity and a tender obedience, made the precepts easy; and as his love animated him to act and suffer all for God, so it imprinted in his soul the most profound sentiments of humility to attribute all honour and glory to him alone. In short, he was possessed of the virtue of charity in its perfection, and, of course, he was possessed of every other virtue, and fulfilled the whole Law and the Prophets; for charity, according to the Apostle, is the plenitude and the end of the Law, and the observance of every other duty and precept of the Law is annexed to and comprehended in it, the whole train of Christian virtues being so closely linked together, that they always go hand in hand, and accompany charity as their queen; their life and their soul, as the four doctors of the Church unanimously teach us. This was the characteristic virtue of St. Nicholas of Myra. He loved God and his neighbour in an eminent degree, and thus he accomplished the Law and complied with every Christian duty. His love for God was without measure. This shall be the subject of the first point. His love for his neighbour was unlimited. This shall be the subject of the second point, and the whole plan and division of the following discourse. Let us previously implore the divine assistance, through the intercession of the blessed Mother of Jesus, greeting her for this end with the words of the Archangel Gabriel. *Ave Maria.*

The Almighty God, who is the Father of all mankind, seems to adopt, after a particular manner, those whom he is pleased to elevate to an eminent degree of sanctity, and to place in the firmament of his Church as so many bright luminaries and models of Christian perfection, to enlighten the world by the lustre of their shining virtues, and to guide mankind by their word and example through the tempestuous ocean of this life into the haven of everlasting bliss. He renders himself for a long time, as it were, deaf to the vows and supplications of their parents, that those rich presents, wherewith he vouchsafes in the abundance of his mercy to favour the world, may appear to be rather the effects of his bounty than the fruits of nature. This special honour was the portion of St. Nicholas of Myra, and the presage of that admirable holiness for which the whole course of his life was remarkably conspicuous. Like unto the Prophet Samuel, he was a child of prayers, devoted to the love and service of his Creator from his infancy. The use of reason and the practice of piety, self-denial, fasting and mortification, with him, were of the same date. His parents, noble by birth, but more noble by their virtues, gave him an early tincture of the knowledge of God's Law, and implanted it deeply in his heart, which rectified his understanding, inflamed his will, and increased his ardour. He knew the power of the Lord, and it made him fear; he knew his mercy, and it

made him hope; he knew his patience, and it made him admire; he knew his goodness, and it made him love. With this fear and hope, admiration and love, he already possessed all that was necessary to conduct him to the summit of perfection in this life, and to an exalted mansion in the eternal tabernacles of glory. He was already adorned with all the smiling innocence of youth, and all the sedateness of an accomplished age. From the time that he was capable of paying unto the Lord an actual tribute of love, he began to love him with his whole heart, and to give him an effectual preference before all created objects. He took particular care to preserve the grace of his baptism like a most precious treasure, and as he advanced in age, to advance gradually in the divine virtue of charity, which the Holy Ghost had infused into his soul at the sacred font. His fervor, far from abating, as it often happens in others, went on increasing in him with his years, until his heart became at length like unto a burning furnace of divine love, and resembled a beauteous altar, constantly breathing the sweet incense and perfume of ardent prayer.

It was his ardent love for Jesus Christ that impelled him to quit his native country, like another Abraham, and undertake a perilous voyage to the holy land of Palestine, in order to kiss and revere the sacred footsteps of his Divine Redeemer. He wished, as it were, to be born anew in the stable of Bethlehem, to bury himself alive in the sepulchre of Jesus, and to die with love at the foot of the cross! To accomplish this design he undauntedly crossed the floating mountains of a tempestuous sea, and after having appeased a dreadful storm, and, like another St. Paul, saved the lives of all the passengers in the ship by his fervent prayers, he arrived at length in Jerusalem, and devoutly visited the holy places which had been bedewed with the precious blood of the immaculate Lamb of God. O, what tongue can describe the transports of his pious soul, and the overflowings of his loving heart, when he came in view of Mount Calvary, smoking in a manner as yet with the sacrilege of the blood-thirsty Jews! What floods of tears flowed from his eyes! What sighs, what amorous complaints darted from his heart and mouth when he ascended the bloody theatre, on which love had caused the Son of God to suffer the most cruel death! Here compassion and love made Nicholas endure a kind of martyrdom, by immolating his innocent body to the rigours of penance on the same altar whereon Jesus Christ had been immolated to the justice of his eternal Father; but the penance of his heart was far more ardent than the penance of his body, and would have prevailed on our saint to shut himself up there in a desert, and like a plaintive dove pine away the remainder of his days in sighs and tears, had not divine Providence been pleased to dispose otherwise of him, and order him to return to his native soil for the good of his neighbours. Called by Heaven, and pressed with a desire of greater

perfection, he betook himself to a monastery, where he died to the world, and to its pomps and vanities, and what is more, he died to himself in the very bloom of life, so that he might truly say with the Apostle: *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world*, Gal. c. vi. v. 14. and again, *With Christ I am fastened to the Cross*, Gal. c. ii. v. 19.

By embracing a religious state Nicholas trampled upon the three great idols that the world adores, and renounced all the external goods of fortune whereof he was possessed; he consecrated his soul, his body, his senses, his own will, his liberty, judgment and understanding to the Lord, and offered himself up entirely as a perfect holocaust and pure victim of divine love. What more convincing proof can you require of the love he had for Jesus Christ, and of the ardent desire with which he was actuated to become, as near as possible, a living image of that divine original? It was this love with which his heart was inflamed that gave him vigour and strength to support all the rigours and austerities of penance, and made every hardship he underwent in the practice of virtue seem light and easy; for, as St. Augustine observes, when charity once commands in the heart, every thing is performed with ease, pleasure, and delight, be it ever so disagreeable or repugnant to the inclinations of corrupt nature. If, my brethren, you wish to experience the truth hereof, and to taste the blessed fruits and happy effects of this divine virtue, imitate St. Nicholas as nearly as you can; give your whole heart without division or reserve to the Lord your God as he did, and you will be convinced that *the yoke of the Lord is sweet and his burden is light*, Mat. c. xi. v. 28. You will be persuaded that there is no comfort, no earthly pleasure or satisfaction comparable to that which results from the practice of virtue, and from the testimony of a good conscience; you will, in a word, acknowledge that true happiness, real content, and peace of mind, can only be found in loving and serving God, and in keeping his commandments. Those who truly love and serve him enjoy a certain inward content, serenity, and sweet evenness of soul, that infinitely surpasses all the pleasures of sense. In the midst of the sharpest trials and the most painful exercises of penance and religion, they often overflow with spiritual comforts and delights, which descend like a refreshing dew from Heaven into their souls, whilst, on the contrary, the lovers of the world, who are wholly intent on the pursuit of vanity and the gratification of their passions, are utter strangers to real happiness and to all true peace and tranquillity of mind, as they are, like slaves, disquieted both night and day, and constantly galled and tortured with the stings and remorses of a guilty conscience, which, like to many vultures, prey upon their hearts and embitter their worldly enjoyments. Yet, people of this description will pretend that they love God; but what proof do they give of their love for him? Does not their conduct

give the lie to their words? Do not their works and actions speak a different language, and plainly shew that in effect they prefer the creature before their Creator. Surely the love of God does not consist in empty sounds, exterior professions; and idle speculations; it does not dwell merely on the tongue, but is a treasure lodged in the heart, which is the seat of love, and it manifests itself by its effects; for then alone we may be truly said to love God, when we observe his commandments, according to this divine oracle pronounced by our Blessed Saviour, Jo. c. x. *He that loves me keeps my commandments.*

It was by this unequivocal test that Nicholas of Myra proved the truth and sincerity of his love for God. *He ran with alacrity in the way of the commandments,* and in the road of perfection, because his love was perfect. Nothing appeared difficult to him but a medium in the practice of works of piety, penance and mortification, because his love was without measure; he had God always in view, and desired only to please him and to plant the love of his infinite goodness in every heart: he despised the fickle and capricious applauses of the world, and was insensible to the empty praises and groundless censures of men, he had a profound respect and veneration for every thing that regarded divine worship, and was sensibly afflicted on seeing his Creator dishonoured and offended by sin, and equally rejoiced at seeing him loved, served, and adored. In fine, he was indefatigable in doing good to mankind, and herein he still manifested the ardour of his love for God by extending it to his neighbour. This reflection leads me to the second point.

To love is a leading principle in the original construction of our nature: We were made to love, and we cannot but love some good or other, either real or apparent, love being the main-spring that sets our lives in motion and inclines us to wish and promote the happiness of those we love, which made St. Augustine say, *My love is my weight; by it I am carried whithersoever I am carried.* In the happy state of innocence man placed all his delight in being united to the Lord his God; his heart was upright, and was carried spontaneously towards God, as to its centre; he had God always before his eyes in all he did, looked upon him as his sovereign good, and found pleasure and joy in loving and serving him; but no sooner did our first parents forfeit their original innocence, but man began, by a strange perversion of the end for which he was created, to set his affections upon earthly enjoyments and sensual gratifications; his heart took a wrong bent and was turned away from his sovereign good; he began to seek only his own pleasure, interest and glory, instead of seeking the pleasure, interest and glory of his Creator. A blind inordinate self-love immediately seized upon all the faculties of his soul, and like a weight, drew away his heart from the love and allegiance he owed the Lord his God, to the love of created objects, and to the pursuit of the apparent and perish-

able goods of this transitory life. Hence a precept of charity became necessary and indispensable, in order to counteract the baneful influence of inordinate self love, and bring back our hearts and affections to God. This precept of charity has two branches springing from the same root, one of which regards God, the other regards our neighbour, and the tendency both of the one and the other is to unite our souls to God by grace in this life, and by eternal glory in the next. The love of our neighbour is an extension of the love we owe God, as it is for God and in God that we are required to love our neighbour. This love is best known by what we do for him in his spiritual and corporal necessities; it is by this token that we can have the most satisfactory proof and the surest testimony that charity reigns in our hearts, if it makes us manifest our love, not with the tongue or in words only, but in deeds and in truth. These maxims were the plan of St. Nicholas's conduct; his charity was ever active, operative and attentive to the various necessities of his neighbour. In his days the Church of Christ was attacked by the Pagan Emperors with the fury of a lion, as St. Augustine speaks, and by the Arian heretics with the craft of a serpent and the cunning of a fox. It was upon this emergency, and at this critical juncture, that the providence of God, which always watches over the Church, and never ceases to supply it with enlightened doctors and zealous pastors, called Nicholas forth from his favourite retreat, and raised him to the eminent rank and dignity of a Bishop. No sooner was he placed, like a refulgent luminary, in this exalted station, but he began to fulfil all the duties of a good pastor, and to diffuse the rays of his sanctity and the splendor of his doctrine all over Lycia, an extensive province in Asia. Nothing could escape his vigilance and assiduity. There was no necessity of the Church that he did not feel and labour and provide for. Nothing could damp his courage; the menaces and sanguinary edicts of the cruel tyrant Dioclesian did not intimidate him. He did not value exile, imprisonment, or any other ill treatment he could receive himself, provided he could but promote the honour and glory of his Divine Master, and contribute to the salvation and happiness of his neighbour. His zeal was pure and disinterested, without any mixture of self-love. His study, his joy and his crown, was to rescue sinners from the jaws of hell, to gain their souls over to Jesus Christ, and to people the kingdom of Heaven with saints. His charity knew no bounds; he watched all opportunities to reclaim the vicious, to bring back the strayed sheep, to instruct the ignorant, to dispel the clouds of error, to stop the progress of impiety, to stem the torrent of iniquity, to defend the truth of the Catholic faith, and to preserve the Christian religion in its native lustre. He was indefatigable in breaking the bread of life to the little ones, and in preaching the Gospel of Jesus by his example as well as by his word; for he was sensible that as St. Augustine observes, words alone are

no more than empty sounds, but good examples are like claps of thunder that strike with an irresistible force. *Verba sonant, exempla tonant.*

He flew with cheerfulness to the practice of every work of mercy, both spiritual and corporal, and allowed himself no repose when the salvation of souls, or the relief of his poor, distressed, and afflicted brethren was in question, and called on him for an exertion of his charity. There was no infidelity committed against God but what he endeavoured to repair; no dissensions in families but what he studied to compose; no good counsel to be given but what he was ready to give. He dried up the tears of the widow and the orphan, and to the utmost of his power administered comfort and succour to every one he knew to stand in need of his assistance. He was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and hands to the helpless, so that he might justly say with holy Job, *Mercy was born with me, and grew with me from my infancy.* It would be an endless task to enumerate every particular instance; however, one fact, that is well attested and recorded by the most faithful historians of his life, can scarce be passed over in silence. As the Angel of the Lord delivered Loth and his daughters from the flames of Sodom, so our Saint, by a singular display of his unlimited charity, rescued three innocent virgins from the jaws of perdition and the flames of impurity, in which their impious father was determined to plunge their souls by the horrid crime of prostitution.

When the furious storm of persecution was appeased by the conversion of Constantine the Great, the first Christian Emperor, Nicholas went to the first Council of Nice, where he shone like a brilliant star amidst the three hundred and eighteen Bishops, who were assembled together in order to refute and condemn the blasphemous errors of Arius and his adherents. Having returned from thence to his episcopal see of Myra, he redoubled his zeal, and continued during the remainder of his life to cultivate the Lord's Vineyard with amazing success, weeding, plucking up, planting, building, destroying; and Heaven was pleased to give an increase every where to his works, as the Apostle speaks. The very elements obeyed his words, the sea and the earth respected his commands, and the Lord vouchsafed to manifest his sanctity, and render his death, which happened in the year 342, as illustrious for a number of renowned and authenticated miracles, as his life had been conspicuous for the splendour of his unbounded charity and other shining virtues.

Have we not reason, then, to honour and praise the Lord this day, and to give him thanks for the wonders of grace and mercy, that his adorable goodness has been pleased to display in favour of his saint? You have heard how the *Law of God* operated in his heart, and how perfectly he fulfilled it to the very last period of his life. O that I was able to prevail on

you, my brethren, to take him for your model, and to walk in his footsteps! O that I could effectually excite you to an imitation of his virtues, particularly his ardent love for God and for his neighbour! Thrice happy they who follow his example herein, since by this means they may confidently hope to partake hereafter of the glorious reward which he now enjoys; for it is in an unfeigned charity in both its branches that true sanctity consists, and it is on it, and not on extraordinary practices or observances, that the felicity of a Christian, both in time and eternity, depends.

O God of charity, teach us to know and practice this divine virtue. Give us grace to testify our love for thee, by an inviolable fidelity and constant perseverance in thy service, and our love for our neighbour by the performance of every social and fraternal duty. Purify our hearts, we beseech thee, from the dross of all earthly affections, and replenish them with true Christian charity. Grant that we may begin, at least from this instant, to love thee above all things, and repair, by the ardour of our love the time we have hitherto lost in not loving thee, O Beauty, ever ancient and ever new. O may all our desires be fixed on thee, and all our works and actions be directed to thy honour and glory, that when the day of eternity shall appear our souls may be admitted, through the merits of our Blessed Redeemer, to a participation of thy heavenly joys; which is the happiness that I heartily wish you all, my dear brethren, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

A DISCOURSE,

On the Scandalous Vice of Profane Swearing, Cursing and Blaspheming.

Vir multum jurans implebitur iniquitate, et non decedet a domo illius
plaga. *Ecclesiastic. c. xxiii. v. 12.*

The man who swears much shall be filled with iniquity, and the scourge of God shall not depart from his house. Eccles. c. xxiii. v. 12.

AMONGST the many scandalous sins which reign at present in the world, there is not any one that calls more loudly for a remedy than the vice of profane swearing, cursing and blaspheming. It is, alas! become now so common in this nation, heretofore distinguished by the glorious title of the Island of

Saints, that we can hardly pass along the public streets without being almost deafened with the loud thunder of tremendous oaths, horrid imprecations and blasphemies, resounding from every corner. Scarce any business is transacted without being sealed with some dreadful curse or false and rash oath; scarce any thing is bought or sold without pouring out a torrent of blasphemous expressions, that are enough to make the hair of the head stand upright, as the Scripture speaks, Eccles. c. xxvii. v. 15. Some people are so unhappily addicted to this vice, that they seem to look upon swearing as an ornament to set off and embellish their discourse, as they almost conclude every sentence with it; nay, they double and treble their oaths in the same phrase and with the same breath, and are ready for another fresh oath before the sound of the first is well out of our ears. They are not content with the atrocious injuries which they commit against their neighbour. Their impiety is not satisfied to stop here; it mounts still higher, till it reaches the very throne of God himself, and immediately attacks and directly strikes at his Divine Majesty. No sooner are their passions opposed or their inclinations thwarted by the least contradiction, but they begin to open their sacrilegious mouths against Heaven, as the Royal Prophet speaks, Ps. lxxii. and vent their anger, like so many infernal furies, blaspheming the name of the Holy Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and treating the precious blood and wounds of their blessed Redeemer with as much irreverence and disrespect as if they were really contemptible in themselves. Great God! what will be the end of this deluge of impiety and wickedness, which, instead of decreasing seems to be gaining ground every day? Whilst the nine choirs of Angels are incessantly singing thy immortal praises, shall men and devils unite in abusing and profaning thy adorable name? The infernal spirits, indeed, may be supposed to rave and blaspheme in the midst of their torments, as they know that their flames are never to be extinguished, and their pains never to be at an end; but that Christians should thus insult their most bountiful and merciful Creator and Redeemer, at the very time that he is showering down his favours and blessings on them, and visiting them every moment with fresh presents of his love, is so outrageous a treatment, and so monstrous an excess of impiety and ingratitude, that it cannot be matched even in hell itself, nor can all the malice of the infernal furies come up to it. Listen, therefore, O unhappy swearers, cursers and blasphemers, and let a serious consideration of the enormity of this scandalous vice, and a timely and sincere repentance, prevent the eternal vengeance, which otherwise must inevitably overtake you one day or other. Be no longer deceived with false notions, for though custom has rendered this vice so common, not only amongst notorious

profligates and professed libertines, but likewise among people of fashion, even the very sex whom modesty should characterise, yet it is highly offensive and injurious to the majesty of God, and extremely pernicious and fatal to the soul of man, as I will briefly shew you in the following discourse, after having previously invoked the divine aid through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, &c. *Ave Maria.*

To swear, as St. John Chrysostom observes, in his Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles, is to call God, either expressly or tacitly, directly or indirectly to witness the truth of things past, present or to come, and to punish the swearer if he tells a lie or fails in the performance of his promise. Oaths are only allowable when they are attended with those three circumstances or conditions, mentioned by the Prophet Jeremy, c. iv. v. 2. *Truth, judgment and justice.* If *truth* be wanting, the oath is called *perjury*; if *judgment*, or discretion be wanting, that is, if an oath be taken without an urgent necessity, reasonable cause, and mature deliberation, it is called *a rash oath*; and if *justice* be wanting, that is, if a person swears that he will do an unlawful and sinful action, it is called *an unjust oath*. To have recourse to an oath with truth, judgment and justice, is so far from being forbid, as the Pelagians and some other sectaries, condemned by the General Council of Constance, have erroneously imagined, that it is an act of religious worship, whereby we honour God, acknowledge his omniscience, and testify the great reverence and veneration we have for his supreme Majesty, as being the infallible truth and the just avenger of all falsehood and lies. Were it not lawful, under these circumstances, to call God to witness the truth of what we assert or promise, there would be an end to human commerce and society; for, as mankind are so given to lies and deceit, especially when their own interest or selfish views are concerned, one man would not give credit to the simple word of another, nor rely with any kind of certainty on his promise. For this reason, oaths have been always held sacred, both in the Law of nature and in the written Law, and are tendered in all nations and in all courts of judicature, in order to acquire a certainty and conviction of the truth, and to put an end to all trials and differences that arise among men, as the Apostle speaks, Heb. c. vi. it being presumed that no one would be so wicked as to dare to dishonour God's holy name by swearing in a known lie, and offering him as a voucher for an untruth.

However there is no affirmative precept for swearing, as there is for praying, offering sacrifice and performing other acts of religion; because, as St. Thomas of Aquin remarks, oaths are remedies against incredulity and the depravity of the heart of man. They are not to be sported with, but to be used occasionally, with great precaution, prudence and

discretion, and only in case of pressing necessity, when a just and lawful cause requires it; like unto corporal medicines, are only applied in case of sickness or some urging necessity, as otherwise, instead of being beneficial and salutary they would rather prove pernicious and destructive to the health of the body.

Perjury is a crime of the blackest die, and so outrageously offensive and injurious to the infinite veracity and holiness of God, and the Prophet Zachary says, c. v. that *the malediction of God will fall on the house of a perjurer*. It would be almost an affront to reason to endeavour to set forth the glaring enormity and crying malice of this sin. It is a crime of high treason, levelled directly and immediately against God himself in person; it implies a formal contempt of his Divine Majesty, and supposes him to be either ignorant of the truth, or capable of bearing false witness, patronizing a lie, and putting his seal to an untruth. The smallness of the matter, which the perjurer thus audaciously brings down God to attest in a lie, does not diminish; but rather aggravates the heinousness of this crime in itself, because it implies a baser disrespect and a more shameful dishonour of God's infinite sanctity; for which reason the Church has declared by Innocent X. that to call God to witness even a small or a trivial lie, which does no damage to our neighbour, is a most heinous mortal sin, that deserves the everlasting flames of hell-fire.

It is evident, also that an unjust oath, by which a person calls God to witness that he will do an unlawful and sinful action, like that of the forty Jews, who swore they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed St. Paul, Acts, c. xxiii. v. 12, implies a great contempt of God, because the swearer, as far as in him lies, makes God thereby the author and abettor of sin, and insolently brings him down as a witness that he is resolved to offend him and to violate his holy Law, which must be highly provoking to his sanctity, though the action that a person swears he will do should happen otherwise to be only a venial sin in itself. As for rash oaths, which are taken in common conversation and discourse, without any necessity, it is plain that they are an open transgression of the divine command, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*; for God's holy name, which ought never to be mentioned but with due respect, is thereby made too free with, and treated with dishonour: it is undervalued, profaned and abused by being brought down upon slight, trivial, and frivolous occasions, and constantly made the subject of every senseless exclamation, and impertinent outcry. To prevent and correct this abuse and profanation of a name which we are not worthy to mention even in our prayers, Christ our Lord gave his followers a negative or condi-

tional precept, never to swear, even in the truth, without a just and necessary cause: *Swear not at all, but let your speech be yes, yes; no, no; Mat. c. v. v. 34.* The same precept is repeated by St. James, saying, *Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the Heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your speech be yea, yea; no, no, that you fall not under judgment, c. v. v. 12.* The wise man cautions us, likewise, against the practice of taking God's name in vain, and swearing rash oaths in common conversation. *Let not thy mouth, says he, be accustomed to swear, because there are many hazards in it, Ecclesiastic. c. xxiii. v. 10.* In the first place, those who are accustomed to swear often, are constantly exposed to the danger of perjury, and are frequently guilty of it, particularly when they swear without proper attention, or swear to a jocose lie, or in a matter great or small that is false in itself or in some of its circumstances; for which reason St. Augustine says, *Vis longe esse a perjurio, noli jurare: Are you willing to remove yourself at a great distance from the horrid crime of perjury, swear not at all.*

Moreover, customary swearing leads the sinner on insensibly to imprecations, maledictions and the most shocking blasphemies. Alas! what a vast heap of such crimes lies at every common swearer's door? It is not with this sin as it is with many other sins; for it is a very unfortunate circumstance of the vice of profane, customary swearing, that, notwithstanding its baseness and enormity, its returns are more frequent, and it may be repeated several times in a minute. In many other grievous sins this cannot be the case: if a man be intoxicated with liquor, there must be some space of time before he can be so again; if he breaks the Sabbath, he cannot do it every day; but profane swearers are ready for a fresh oath at every sentence they pronounce. What a multitude of perjuries are those sinners guilty of, who repeatedly swear against drinking spirituous liquors for a year or some certain limited time, and nevertheless violate their oaths in the interim several times perhaps in the course of a single day? What a number of rash and unjust oaths have they to account for, who, upon the slightest occasion, run to the prayer-book, and, in open violation of the law of God and the law of the land, tender and take so many destructive combination oaths, which, being only bonds of iniquity, they afterwards find themselves under the necessity of breaking? It would be enough to sink them almost to despair to count the number of their crimes, to behold their enormity in their proper colours, and to consider attentively, that every false, unjust, and rash oath, execration and blasphemy which they have uttered during the whole course of their life, is recorded in the great book of accounts, which shall be produced against them on the terrible day of judgment. O with what shame and con-

fusion will they be then covered, when, as St. Augustine speaks, they shall see all their sins arranged before their eyes in characters as visible as the rays of the sun? If the Gospel assures us that a strict account shall be then demanded for every idle word, what a dreadful account must they give for the volleys of blasphemous oaths and imprecations which they discharge every day in the year, and almost every hour in the day? Unless they avert in time the wrath of Heaven by a true conversion, what else can they expect but to be cast into a pool of fire and sulphur, like the wild beast, mentioned in the Apocalypse, c. xiii. which was plunged into hell for having opened its mouth in blasphemies against God and his saints.

Blasphemy is a crime of so deep a die, that as St. Jerom says, murder is but a small sin in comparison of it. We have melancholy instances of its crying malice and enormity in Sedecias, Holofernas, Antiochus, and Sennacherib, in punishment of whose oaths and blasphemies one hundred and eighty-five thousand men were killed by an Angel in one night, 4 Kings, c. xix. We read also in the third Book of Kings, c. ii. that one hundred and twenty thousand Syrians were destroyed for one blasphemy uttered by Benadad their King. The Book of Leviticus, c. xxiv. informs us, that the Lord ordered blasphemers to be stoned to death, as being unworthy of life, after having insulted the Author of life. Nay, what is remarkable, the parents of a blasphemer incurred a mark of perpetual infamy in the Old Law, and for their greater confusion were pointed at with the fingers of the whole multitude then present, as having been accessory to the impiety of their children, either by their own scandalous example or by their neglect of due and timely correction. This should be a warning to those unhappy fathers and mothers of our days, who, by their disorderly lives and wicked example, teach their unfortunate children from their very cradle to curse, swear and blaspheme the name of their Creator. Instead of having recourse to the reforming rod when necessary, they fly into the most violent passions, often without any provocation, praying to God to blast, damn and confound their poor little infants, or calling upon the devil to come and carry them; and least he should forget to come and take them away, they take care to put him frequently in mind of it. How undeservedly do such parents bear the name of Christians? Might they not be justly stiled Turks, since they scarce give any other proof of their being Christians, but when they blasphemously profane the sacred name, precious blood and wounds of Christ? The Jews themselves looked upon blasphemy to be one of the most horrid crimes that could be committed by man, and were shocked to that degree at hearing it, that they usually stopped their ears and tore their garments asunder. St. Augustine, speaking of the great abhorrence

and detestation in which they held this crime, takes an occasion to inveigh against those Christian blasphemers who are neither afraid nor ashamed to outdo them in impiety, and to blaspheme Jesus Christ, now seated at the right hand of his eternal Father. Christ, says this holy doctor, was heretofore scourged with the rods of the Jews; now-a-day he is scourged with the blaspheming tongues of wicked Christians, so that he had reason to complain through the mouth of the Prophet and say, *My name is continually blasphemed from morning till night, from the rising to the setting of the sun.* Isai. c. lii. v. 5.

Other sins are committed in secrecy, and covered with the darkness of night; but the blasphemous swearer and curser is so far from hiding his wickedness, that, on the contrary, like a first-rate sinner, he makes it his glory to publish his guilt, and to render the enormity of his crimes conspicuous. Such is the fatal property of this vice, that, besides the guilt of it nakedly considered in itself, it is generally attended with the additional guilt of scandal, by which means it glides into the mouths of both young and old, and passes from family to family, from one generation to another. It is easy then, to conceive, with how much reason the Scripture says that *the man who swears much shall be filled with iniquity*; since, exclusive of the number of rash, unjust, and false oaths, imprecations and blasphemies he is personally guilty of himself, he is moreover accountable to God for all those to which he is accessory, and which by his scandalous example he causes others to be guilty of. *Wo be to the man*, says the Gospel, *by whom scandal cometh*. What a dreadful wo must then await him who propagates this infernal language every day of his life, and, by means of the bad impression his words make on the minds of the hearers, transmits the infection to posterity after his death? Will not the blasphemous oaths and curses of as many persons as have inherited his impiety, and learned from him to curse and swear, be justly placed to his account? Will not the souls of as many as he has scandalized and corrupted, plead against him on the last day? Will not every fresh crime committed through his fault on earth after his death, subject him to fresh torments in hell?

I know that people addicted to this scandalous vice in order to palliate their impiety, are apt to say that it is only the effect of their impatience and of an evil habit strengthened by custom and bad example; but neither the weakness of nature, nor the violence of passion, nor the inveteracy of an old habit or custom, can excuse them or plead their pardon. Surely the habit and frequency of cursing and swearing cannot be supposed to diminish the crime, when it is entertained without taking any pains to overcome it. Is a man less criminal because he robs, steals, or murders frequently? Does not the

custom aggravate his guilt and render him more culpable? Will oaths and imprecations remove the cause of a person's impatience, or redress the grievance that he complains of? There is no other sin for which the sinner may not allege some kind of excuse in his own behalf, but cursing and swearing is a tasteless and fruitless sin, that neither brings profit, pleasure, utility, convenience, or any other advantage. It wants the usual motives of other sins, and is therefore termed a diabolical impiety, a mortal habit of sinning, and the language of hell, whereby its children are distinguished, as the inhabitants of one country are distinguished from the inhabitants of another, by the language which they speak. The Scripture assures us, that *he shall not be guiltless, nor go unpunished, who takes the name of God in vain*, Exod. c. xx. and again, *that the scourge of God shall not depart from the house of the man who swears much*, Eccles. c. xxiii. His oaths and curses contribute to fill up the measure of his iniquities, and fall back, sooner or later, on his own criminal head. St. Augustine, l. 22, de Civ. and St. Gregory the Great, l. 4. dial. c. 28, quote different examples of the divine vengeance pursuing notorious cursers and swearers, and inflicting on them the most severe punishment even in this life. Other ancient writers tell us, that by a just judgment of God, they are often suffered to die with a curse or blasphemy in their mouths, and to breathe their impious souls into the jaws of Satan, like the blaspheming thief on Mount Calvary, who was permitted to descend from the temporal punishment of the cross into the unquenchable flames of hell. Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, Book 6, c. 9, relates the following passage of three cursers and swearers: The first of them wished he might be burnt if what he affirmed upon oath was not true; the second prayed that he might be seized with a fit of sickness, and the third that he might be struck blind if what he asserted was false. In a short time, they all obtained their respective requests. The first was burnt alive with his whole family; the second was overwhelmed with malignant disorders from head to foot; the third, seeing the visible judgments that fell on his companions, and dreading the immediate wrath of Heaven, began to repent, and wept so bitterly for his past impiety, that he lost the sight of both his eyes by the abundance of his tears. Since, therefore, my brethren, the vice of profane swearing, cursing and blaspheming, is so offensive and provoking to God, and so destructive and fatal to the sinner, let me beseech you not only to refrain from it yourselves, but also to discountenance it in others, on whom your charitable admonitions are likely to have any influence, or at least to shun the company of such as will not tamely receive a friendly advice. Let me entreat you in the name of God the Father, who created you; in the name of God the Son, who redeemed you; in the name of God the

Holy Ghost, who sanctified you, to curb your passions, to bridle your tongues, and to watch carefully over all the words that proceed from your mouths. O Sovereign Majesty of Heaven, inspire us all with an abhorrence and detestation of this scandalous vice, and possess our souls with that awful respect and reverence which are due to thy great and adorable name. Place it as a signet upon our hearts, and engrave it in our souls in the deepest characters of love; give us grace to employ our tongues here on earth as we hope to employ them hereafter in Heaven, that, after having honoured and glorified thee in this life, we may sing thy praises for a never-ending eternity in the next; and this is the happiness, my dear brethren in Christ, which I heartily wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.

END OF SERMONS.

APPENDIX

TO

THE SECOND VOLUME

OF

SERMONS AND MORAL DISCOURSES,

BY

THE REV. W. GAHAN.

On the First Communion of Children.

Jesus dixit, Sinite parvulos venire ad me, et nolite vetare eos talium est enim regnum Dei. *Luc. c. xviii. v. 16.*

Jesus said to his disciples, Suffer the little ones to come to me and do not forbid them, for to such belongeth the kingdom of God.
Luke, c. xviii. v. 16.

BEFORE COMMUNION.

YE are assembled here this day, my dear Children, in order to make your first Communion, and to partake of that heavenly and divine banquet, which our blessed Redeemer instituted at his last supper, and bequeathed unto us to be the spiritual food and nourishment of our souls. A great undertaking indeed, and one of the most important, one of the most happy actions of your whole life, if it be well performed. Ye are, I hope, all clothed with the nuptial robe of the divine virtue of charity; ye have all approached the Sacrament of Penance, and I trust in the mercies of God, your souls are all washed and purified in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, your dear Redeemer, from the stains of sin which ye have hitherto contracted, either through ignorance or human frailty, and with which ye might, perhaps, have defiled the white garment of your baptismal innocence. In a word, ye have proved yourselves according to the Apostle's direction, and prepared a dwelling place in your hearts for the reception of him, who assures us in the Scripture, that it is *his delight to be with the Children of Men.*

Yes, my dear Children, it is the delight of Jesus, your loving Redeemer; *to be with the Children of Men*. He is willing to communicate himself to them; he is ready to dispense his gracious favours to them; he seeks for a lodging in their hearts, and is desirous to take a permanent possession of their souls, and to abide in them for ever. During the time of his mortal life here on earth, he was pleased to express a particular tenderness and affection for *the little ones*. He vouchsafed to embrace them, and to command that they should not be hindered from approaching his sacred person. *Suffer the little ones to come to me*, said he to his disciples, *and do not forbid them, for to such belongeth the Kingdom of God*. Nay, he declares in the Gospel, that unless we become like little children we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Come then with confidence, my dear children, to the sacred table of Jesus. Come with a lively faith and a firm belief of his real presence in the blessed Sacrament. Come with the meekness and humility of his little ones, and bring the spotless innocence of children with you to the Altar of God, says St. Augustine. Come with piety, devotion, and a spiritual hunger, or an ardent desire of uniting yourselves with him, and enriching your souls with his divine graces. Come with a pure intention of honouring and glorifying the Lord, and working your own salvation. Come, in fine, with a feeling sense and a grateful remembrance of Christ's bitter death and passion, whereof this adorable sacrament is to be a perpetual memorial unto the end of the world. The happy hour is at length arrived on which ye are going to receive the Holy of Holies, and to be fed with the delicious manna, or food of Angels, whereof the manna of the old Law was but a shadow. What the Holy Patriarch Abraham only had the happiness to see in figure, what venerable Simeon was only admitted to embrace in his arms, ye are going to receive really and substantially in the very temple of your souls. Yes, my dear children, ye are now upon the point of receiving the eternal son of the living God, with his whole divinity and humanity; for not contented to have sacrificed his life for your sake on Mount Calvary, he is now going to nourish ye, like the Pelican, with his own sacred flesh and blood, accompanied with his soul and divinity. Rouse yourselves, therefore, and breath forth from the bottom of your hearts the most fervent aspirations of divine love. Endeavour to excite most devout acts of faith, hope, charity and contrition, and to work yourselves into every disposition that is necessary to render ye acceptable in the sight of the Lord. O God of mercy and giver of all good gifts, grant, we beseech thee, all these dispositions to those Children, who are assembled here this day in thy name. O Holy Ghost descend upon them, and kindle in their hearts the fire of charity. Remember not, O Lord, the follies and ignorances of their youth, but according to thy great mercy be mindful of them in thy eternal

glory. Have compassion on their sighs, have compassion on their tears, and for thy tender mercy's sake grant them a full discharge from all their past sins. They renounce the devil, and all his works, and all his pomps. They are sorry that they did not begin to know and love you sooner. They are resolved for the future to love and serve you, the only true and living God. Behold them, O sweetest Jesus, prostrate before thy altar; be propitious to them; come and take possession of their souls; come and replenish them not only with thy graces and benedictions, but also with thy own divine presence.

Recite the *Confiteor*, &c. *Misereatur*, &c. *Indulgentiam*, &c. *Eccce agnus Dei*, &c. These are the words that St. John the Baptist made use of when he pointed out the world's Redeemer to the Jews: the meaning of them is, *Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sins of the world.* Now imitate the humility of the Centurion in the gospel, and say, *Domine non sum dignus*, &c. that is, O Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, speak but the word, and my soul shall be healed, &c. *Corpus D. N.* &c. May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto everlasting life.

AFTER COMMUNION.

YE are now my dear children, in possession of the richest treasure that Heaven could bestow ye. Ye have now received the most Holy Sacrament of your Saviour's body and blood, which ye have longed for this time past with so much ardour. Your souls are now become a kind of Heaven on earth. Ye are become the living temples of the Holy Ghost, and the members of Jesus Christ, after a new and particular manner. O what return will ye make to the Lord your God for all his favours and blessings? Can ye do less than make him an offering of yourselves? Can ye do less than welcome your dear Redeemer upon his coming under your roof? Can ye do less than pour forth your hearts in his presence, and break out into the most fervent acts of adoration, praise and thanksgiving? Far from taking pattern by those ungrateful Christians, who, to the great detriment of their souls, rise up immediately after receiving the blessed Sacrament, and turn their backs to Christ, as if they were tired of his company; far, I say, from taking pattern by them or following their example herein, do ye entertain the divine guest ye have received, with all the affections of your souls; spend at least the space of a quarter of an hour at prayer after receiving, especially as the time that Jesus is present after Communion is extremely precious, and the most favourable for obtaining of his divine Majesty every grace that ye stand in need of. Employ then this time as well as you possibly can to the advantage of your souls. Cry out with the royal prophet David, *O my soul bless and praise the Lord, and all that is within me magnify his holy name.* Invite the three faculties of

your souls, your memory, your understanding, and will, to render unto your amiable Jesus the same homage that the three kings or sages of the East paid him after his Nativity in the stable of Bethlehem. Make him a present of your hearts in return for his having given himself to you. Offer him the gold of an ardent charity, the incense of fervent and devout prayer, and the myrrh of penance and mortification. Cast yourselves in spirit, at the feet of the Lord, like Mary Magdalen, and wash them with your tears. Like the five thousand men who were fed in the desert with five barley loaves, make Jesus king of your hearts. Like the two disciples of Emmaus, importune him to stay with you, and to take a permanent possession of your souls. Like the Patriarch Jacob, do not quit him until he leaves you his blessing. Imitate the spouse in the Canticles, and embrace him in spirit, saying, *I have found him whom my soul loves, I will hold him and not let him go.* Invite Heaven and earth, and the nine choirs of Angels, to join with you in proclaiming the praises of your most bountiful benefactor. Renew the vows of your baptism, and beseech the Lord that this Communion may serve you as a second baptism, and the beginning of a new life. Lay all your necessities before the compassionate eyes of Jesus, and pray him to grant you grace to overcome all evil habits, to master your passions, to resist all temptations, and to advance every day in virtue, as you advance in age.

After ye leave the Chapel, take particular care to preserve the inestimable treasure ye have received. Avoid most carefully the company of wicked children; shun all dangerous occasions of Sin; fly from all the snares of the devil. Spend a good part of this day in prayer, and in reading spiritual books; guard against anger and passion, and every thing else that might rob ye of the grace of God and banish Christ out of your souls. Ye ought to look upon yourselves from henceforth as living temples of the Holy Ghost, and as consecrated tabernacles, wherein the King of Kings, and the God of Majesty has chosen his abode. Ye are to remember that to relapse wilfully into mortal sin after this day, is to lose the benefit of your first communion; it is to profane the temple of God; it is to dishonour the body of Jesus Christ; it is to deliver him over to his enemies, and betray him with a kiss like unfortunate Judas. May the Lord of his infinite mercy preserve ye from the like misfortune. May the sacred body of Jesus Christ purify your bodies; may his sacred blood plead mercy for ye and wash away all your sins; may his heart possess your hearts; may his spirit govern your spirit; may his soul inflame your souls with the fire of divine love.

Ah! my dearest children, let me once more, before I part ye, entreat ye all by the bowels of Jesus Christ to fly from sin as from the face of a venomous serpent, and to begin a new life from this hour, like so many new-born infants. Respect and

honour Jesus Christ within yourselves, and dread nothing more than to forfeit his love and friendship. Follow the rules that have been laid down for you, and let the world see, by your modest behaviour, that ye are truly the children and servants of God. Regard this day as one of the happiest days of your whole life; as a day of grace and benediction. Let not your devotion end with it, for it is not sufficient to begin well, unless ye persevere, since *he alone who perseveres to the end shall be saved*. Esteem, love and obey your parents, as the Lord commands ye. Let not their pains, their prayers, their tears be lost on ye. Consider all the fatigue and trouble they undergo for your sake, and with what care and anxiety they labour to make ye happy. O what consolation, what joy will it afford them, if ye answer their pious expectations! What pleasure will it give all your friends to see you become upright Christians and faithful servants of God. Full of hopes that this will be your constant study, I will now, in the name of the ever Blessed Trinity, dismiss ye all to your respective abodes, like so many holy innocents, like so many little missionaries, to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ wherever ye go, by the regularity of your lives. I will send ye into all the adjacent parishes to promote the honour and glory of God, by the purity of your morals, and to edify all the children in your neighbourhood, and all others ye happen to converse with, by your good example and wholesome advice. For this end I wish ye the same blessings that the brothers of Rebecca wished her at the time of her departure. *Soror nostra es, crescas in mille millia*, Gen. xxiv. We are all brethren in Jesus Christ, as we have all the same father in Heaven, are all born for the same end, and all aspire to the same hope. May the Heavens therefore pour down a thousand benedictions on ye all; may ye all increase every day of your lives in divine grace and spiritual riches. May ye ever remain firm and constant in the service of your Creator, and in the happy possession of that most valuable treasure ye have received this day.

O blessed mother of Jesus, take these little ones under thy motherly protection, and by thy powerful intercession with thy beloved son, who laid down his life for their sake, preserve them from falling into the snares of Satan, or being seduced by the allurements of the corrupt world.

O ye Angels of God, who are appointed their guardians, watch over them, and conduct them by your prayers through the dangerous ocean of this life into the desired harbour of eternal bliss. This, my dear little flock, is the happiness which I heartily wish each and every one of ye, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

A SHORT AND PLAIN EXPOSITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Sic ergo orabit, Pater noster qui es in Cœlis.—Matt. c. vi. v. 9.

*You shall pray, therefore, in this manner: Our Father who art in Heaven.
Matt. c. vi. v. 9.*

OF all vocal prayers, the Lord's Prayer is the most perfect and the most excellent; it is the model and pattern of all other prayers; nay, all other prayers are but a paraphrase upon it, for it contains the substance of all things that we may and ought to demand of God, and it is an abridgment of all that we are to hope for, as the Creed is an abridgment of all that we are to believe. Tertullian calls it a compendium of the Gospel. St. Augustine stiles it the daily prayer of every Christian, and recommends it as a remedy against the sins of every day. In fine, the Universal Church holds it in such high esteem, that it has inserted it in the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to the end that all the faithful, united in one body, should join together with the Priest in offering up this heavenly address to the divine Majesty, in the name of Jesus Christ, who was the author of it, and who vouchsafed to dictate the very words it contains. It is composed of a short Preface, and seven Petitions or Requests, whereof the three first directly regard the honour and glory of God, and the four last our own good, both for our souls and bodies, together with the evils from which we beg to be delivered. These words, *Our Father, who art in heaven*, make up the Preface. We are taught to say *our Father*, rather than *my Father*, because we are all brethren in Jesus Christ, and children of the same heavenly Father. All men, both rich and poor, are called to the same inheritance, without distinction, and are brethren in Jesus Christ, notwithstanding the diversity of their states. Consequently they ought to have a mutual love and charity for each other, and pray not only for themselves, but for all mankind in common. It is to inculcate these duties that our blessed Saviour teaches us to say *our Father*, and not *my Father*; but if the word *our* includes charity and brotherly love for our neighbour, the word *Father*, which is added to it, ought to inspire us with sentiments of charity and love for God. By this sweet name we are reminded of his goodness to us, and of our duty and obligation to love and serve him, and to behave like worthy

children of so great a Father. We are hereby reminded of the great benefit of our creation, and of our being made his adoptive children and heirs of life everlasting; for it is by creation and adoption that God is our Father. By creation he is the Father of all his creatures; but by adoption he is, in a particular manner, the Father of all good Christians. *See what excessive charity the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be named, and should be the children of God,* cries out St. John, ep. 1. c. iii. v. 1. But if we be children, we are likewise heirs, as St. Paul remarks, Rom. viii. 17. *heirs indeed of God, and co-heirs of Christ,* v. 29, *who is the first begotten among many brethren, and who is not ashamed to call them his brethren,* Heb. ii. v. 11.

O Christians! what an honour, what an happiness for us to be children of God, brethren of Jesus Christ, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven? Many boast of their corporal birth, whereby they come into the world defiled with sin, children of anger, slaves of Satan, and confederates of hell; but how few are there to be found who set any great value on, or even entertain a serious thought of their spiritual birth by baptism, which raises them from the miserable state of children of perdition to the great dignity of the children of God, and gives them a right to call the King of Kings, and the Creator of heaven and earth, their *Father*? Hence St. Paul says, Rom. viii. v. 14. *Whoever are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God;* and v. 15. *You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry out Abba, that is to say, Father.* Nothing less than an express order of Jesus Christ was necessary to authorize us, poor worms of the earth, and miserable creatures, defiled with many sins, and unworthy to be named even servants of God; nothing less, I say, than an express order of Christ was necessary to authorize us, before we could dare to make use of this noble title, and call the Lord by the name of *our Father*. Therefore the priest, as a public minister of the Church, before he begins in the name of the whole congregation to recite the Lord's Prayer in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, premises the following words; *præceptis salutaribus moniti, &c.* that is to say, *being admonished by salutary precepts, and instructed by divine institution, we venture to take the liberty of saying, Our Father, &c.* This most endearing title of *Father* is placed in the very beginning of this prayer, rather than that of King, Lord, or the like forbidding terms. Why so? not only to inspire us with sentiments of charity, but also to animate our hope, and make us approach the throne of grace with greater confidence; for as children, in their distresses and necessities, go with more confidence to their father for succour and relief, because a father has naturally a tenderness for his children, and is inclined to assist them to the utmost of his power; so in like manner we may and ought the more confidently cry out to the Almighty for help, and conceive the most

firm hope of succeeding and obtaining from his mercy every thing we stand in need of, as we are ordered to go to him, not as slaves to their Lord, but in quality of children to their *Father*. After this endearing title, in which so much is comprehended, the following words are added: *Who art in heaven*. Mention is here made of *heaven*, to give us to understand, that when we begin our prayers we ought to raise our thoughts and minds to heaven, and seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father, and not the things that are here below on earth, as St. Paul speaks, Colos. c. iii. But why do we not say *Our Father who art on earth*, as well as *who art in heaven*, since it is certain that he is not confined to any particular place, but is at the same time present in heaven, on earth, in all places, and whole in every place, both by his power, by his knowledge, and by his essence and substance? The reason why *Heaven* is here particularly mentioned is, first, because it is the noblest part of the universe, and, as it were, the palace and principal seat where God resides and manifests himself with the greatest splendor and majesty. Secondly, he is said to be in *Heaven*, in order to excite in us an ardent desire of arriving one day in those sacred mansions of bliss, where he displays his glory to the blessed with so much magnificence.

The first Petition of the Lord's Prayer is, *Hallowed be thy name*, that is to say, our first request, O heavenly Father, is, that thy name, which is always intrinsically holy in itself, may be sanctified, honoured, and treated with due respect, that infidels may be converted, heretics may be brought back to the sheep-fold of the Church, schismatics may be re-united, cursers, swearers, and blasphemers may refrain from their scandalous practices; in a word, that all sinners may be reclaimed from their evil ways, and may join in promoting thy honour, and in praising, serving, and adoring thy sovereign Majesty. This is the purport of the first petition, and it is placed at the head of all the rest, because a child of God ought first, and before all things, to seek the honour and glory of his heavenly Father, according to these words of the Gospel, Matt. vi. 33. *Seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all things shall be given you over and above*.

The second Petition is, *Thy kingdom come*. The kingdom we here sue for is not a temporal, but a spiritual kingdom; that is, the kingdom of grace in this life, and the kingdom of glory in the next, or the eternal salvation of our souls. By the kingdom of God is here meant, not only eternal glory in heaven, which we hope for after the miseries of this life are ended, but also the grace of Jesus Christ, whereby he reigns spiritually and sovereignly in our souls here on earth, according to this saying of the Gospel, Luke, c. xvii. *The kingdom of God is within you*. We pray, therefore, that God may reign here in our souls by his divine grace, and that we may hereafter reign with him for ever in the kingdom of his glory. We beg that

the empire of Satan may be overthrown; that he may never exercise any dominion over us; that sin may not reign in our hearts; that passion may not over-rule us, but that by believing and practising what Christ has ordered, we may, through his merits, be entitled to the possession of his everlasting kingdom. In fine, we pray for the extension of the spiritual kingdom of the Church, and as the Fathers of the Old Testament longed for the first coming of Christ, so, in like manner, when we say, *Thy kingdom come*, we thirst after his second coming, with a firm hope of hearing, at the last day, these comfortable words from his mouth: *Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom that was prepared for ye from all eternity.* This kingdom suffers violence, and it is by doing violence to corrupt nature, that it is to be carried. The way is straight, and the gate is narrow. If we mean to arrive one day in this kingdom, we must comply with God's holy will, by observing his laws and keeping his commandments; for, as our blessed Saviour expressly declares, Matt. c. vii. v. 21. *Not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* For this reason,

The next petition is, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* Here we pray that all mankind may obey God, that we may be always resigned to his holy will, as well in adversity as in prosperity, and be pleased with whatever he orders for us, whether sickness, misfortunes, or death; that we may thus imitate the Angels and Saints in heaven, who have but one will with God. Happy they who thus conform their own will to the divine will. Happy, I say, they are, because they have every thing they wish and desire, as they will nothing but what God wills. Moreover, we beg that God may enable us, by his grace, to keep his commandments; to serve him without offending him; and to do his will in all things as readily, and as cheerfully, though not so perfectly, as the Angels and Saints in heaven do. This is, in a few words, the purport of the three first Petitions of the Lord's Prayer. First, we are to address ourselves to God, as to our heavenly Father, and to have a zeal for his honour, as being his children. Secondly, we must seek to inherit the kingdom he has prayed for us. Thirdly, we must be governed by his will, rather than by our own wills and desires, and therefore these three Petitions, *Hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*, have the first rank, and are placed at the head of all the rest, to mark out to us that they must over-rule all our other prayers, and be as settled principles, pre-supposed to, and implied in every thing we ask.

The fourth Petition is, *Give us this day our daily bread*, that is to say, all necessary food both for soul and body; for as children, who do the will of their parents, expect necessa-

ries from them, so the children of God, who do his will, and observe his laws, may confidently rely on his providential care. Every word in this Petition merits our particular attention. The word *Bread*, in the Scripture phrase, signifies all necessities, both spiritual and corporal. By it is meant not only the food and raiment which our body stands in need of, and with which St. Paul desires us to be content, but also the *spiritual bread*, or nourishment of our souls, such as the word of God, the grace of God, and the holy sacraments, especially the blessed Sacrament of the Altar, which Christ instituted for the sanctification and nourishment of our souls, and which ought to be received every day in spirit and desire. Hence, in the vi. c. of St. Matt. we read, *give us this day our superstantial bread*, from which it is evident that by the word *bread*, is also meant the uncommon and supernatural food of the soul, which Christians ought to be in a condition to receive every day, according to these words of St. Augustine: *Live so that you may be fit to receive it every day; for if it be the daily bread of Christians, why do you only receive it once in a year?* We say in this Petition, *Give us this day*, and not *give me this day*, to denote the brotherly love Christians are to have for each other, and to remind them that they are to wish unto others what they wish unto themselves, according to reason and the law of charity. *This day* is mentfoned, and not *to-morrow*, to teach us that we are to recite this prayer *every day*, and after using our own endeavours, we must rely on the providence of God, without giving ourselves too much trouble, uneasiness, or anxiety of mind about the time to come, according to these words of our Saviour: *Be not solicitous for to-morrow, saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or with what shall we be clothed? for all these things the heathen seek after, and your Father knows that you stand in need of all these things.* We are therefore to expect them from his bountiful hands, as he is the giver of all good gifts. However, a reasonable solicitude in providing for the time to come, is so far from being forbidden, that it would be tempting God to depend entirely upou extraordinary means, and neglect having recourse to the lawful and ordinary methods that Christian prudence dictates, and the Author of Nature has appointed for mankind, to acquire a competent subsistence for themselves and their families in this life. This, I say, would be tempting God, who, as the book of Genesis informs us, has condemned us all, in the person of our first parents, to earn our bread in the sweat of our brow, and in the labour of our hands, for which reason, St. Paul says, *he that labours not deserves not to eat.* It is not, indeed, to our own industry or providence, but to the special bounty of God, that we are indebted for all things. It is from him that all favours and blessings are conveyed unto us through the hands of the second causes, and therefore we are bound to pray unto him every day, that

he may be pleased to bless our endeavours, to continue his favours, and to send us every thing that is necessary for the preservation of our life here on earth. When we thus do what is required on our part, we may rest secure that the wise and benevolent Ruler of the universe, who supported the children of Israel with manna; who fed the Prophet Elias with bread that he sent him by a raven; who multiplied the oil and meal of the widow of Sarephta; who satiated five thousand persons with five loaves and two fishes; and whose provident care extends itself to the minutest thing that belongs to us: nay, even to the least hair of our heads, as the Scripture speaks, Luke, c. xxviii. v. 18. will not be wanting to us on his part. It is to be observed, that in this petition we pray for *our daily bread* and not another man's bread; because we are not to covet our neighbour's property, nor desire any thing that is unjustly acquired. The word *daily*, which is expressed in this petition, reminds us that we are not to demand superfluities, but necessities, and that our request ought to be daily repeated during the time of our mortal life, because our need thereof is *daily*.

The three following petitions of the Lord's Prayer treat of the evils, from which we beg to be delivered, as the four foregoing petitions treat of the goods that are necessary both for soul and body. Hence the fifth petition is, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*. By *our trespasses* are meant, our sins and offences, whereby we are made debtors to the justice of God, who by sin is robbed of the honour due to his Divine Majesty. As often as we repeat this petition, it ought to inspire us with the most profound sentiments of humility and repentance, as it reminds us that we are all sinners, and consequently under a necessity of suing for the remission of our sins with a contrite and humbled heart. It should also serve to animate our hope, as it convinces us of the boundless mercy of the Lord; for were he not always ready and willing to extend his mercy to all repenting sinners, our Blessed Saviour never would have inserted these words in the daily form of prayer which he prescribed for all mankind. Besides the other conditions and terms upon which he is willing to receive us into his favour, and to pardon all our iniquities, he requires that we should forgive our brethren from our hearts the offences and injuries they commit against us. *Forgive us as we forgive*; that is, after the same manner. Behold the condition; so that if we do not forgive them without exception, neither will our Father, who is in Heaven, forgive us our sins, as our Saviour expressly declares, Mark, c. xi. v. 15. Hence he says, Luke, c. xvii. v. 5. *Look well to yourselves: If your brother sins against you, reprove him; and if he repent, forgive him; and if he should sin against you seven times a day, and should again return to you seven times in a day, saying,*

I am sorry for it, forgive him. Nay, we are not only bound to forgive all injuries from our hearts, and lay aside all animosities, desires and thoughts of revenge, but even to love our greatest enemies for God's sake, and overcome evil by good, as St. Paul speaks, Rom. c. xii. v. 20. *If thy enemy be hungry, feed him; if he be thirsty, give him to drink; for in doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.*

The sixth petition is, *And lead us not into temptation.* In this petition we pray that God may not permit us to be tempted, so as to be overcome. We beseech him that he may not leave us to our weakness, or abandon us in the day of battle; but that he may give us grace, and enable us to resist all evil temptations, so as to come off victorious, and be entitled to that reward which he promises in c. ii. v. 10. of the Apocalypse, *Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*; and James, i. *Blessed is the man who suffers temptation.* The seventh and last petition is, *But deliver us from evil.* This request is, as it were, a recapitulation of all the foregoing petitions; for to demand of God *to deliver us from evil*, is to beg of him to preserve us from yielding to any temptation, to pardon us our sins, to give us all necessities both spiritual and corporal, to make us do his will, thirst after his kingdom, and live so that his holy name may be sanctified by us. In fine, it is to beg of God to deliver us from all evils past, present and to come, as the Church interprets it, both in the Mass and in the Litanies. We pray, in particular, to be delivered from mortal sin, from a hardened heart, final impenitence in this life, and from eternal damnation in the next; these being the greatest and the most dreadful of all evils that can befall either soul or body. We pray, that God may preserve us from the deceits of the devil, who is the author of all evil; from a sudden and unprovided death; from the punishments due to sin, whether in purgatory or in hell; from anger, hatred and ill-will; from lightning and tempest; and generally from all the temporal evils, public calamities, and miseries that are incident to human life, such as sickness, poverty, war, famine, plagues, persecutions, and such like scourges. However, when we thus pray to be delivered from temporal evils, sufferings and afflictions, our hearts and wills must be so disposed as to choose effectually the continuance of them, if it be God's will, rather than with his displeasure to purchase a deliverance. We may pray indeed for a deliverance, but conditionally, and with resignation to the divine will, provided that God sees it to be conducive to his honour and expedient for the salvation of our souls that we should be delivered from them; otherwise we pray that he may give us grace to bear them patiently. This condition is implied in the aforesaid petition, wherein we only beg to be delivered from what is evil. Now, properly speaking, nothing is evil with regard to us but what obstructs our salvation, or is an obstacle to

our future happiness ; consequently, when temporal afflictions contribute thereto, or are a necessary means of our salvation, they are not to be looked upon as evils, but as blessings, especially since it is decreed for us *to enter the kingdom of Heaven through many tribulations*, and since *a moment of tribulation (borne patiently) works in us an eternal weight of glory*, as St. Paul assures us, 2 Cor. iv. Would to God this important truth was well weighed by those whom the Lord is pleased to visit with afflictions in this life, in order to spare them in the next. Instead of repining under the weight of their crosses ; instead of launching out into murmurs and complaints, or accusing Providence of partiality in the distribution of its temporal blessings ; instead of being dissatisfied when their prayers are seemingly disregarded, and their desires are not gratified in the way they request, they would acquiesce to God's will, and prefer his pleasure before their own ease ; they would without hesitation drink the cup which he presents them with, persuaded that the more bitter it is, the more salutary and healthful it will prove. In fine, they would find an inward consolation and solid peace under the sharpest trials and the most acute pains of the body. This is that peace which Christ left his disciples, which the Apostle recommended to the primitive Christians, which the holy martyrs enjoyed amidst the bitterest torments, and which nothing but an hearty submission to the will of God is able to procure. A pious Christian, therefore, far from exulting in the prosperity of this life, should rather be alarmed at it, and dread least it may be said to him in the next life, *Thou hast received thy reward*, Mat. c. vi. or what was said to the rich glutton, Luke, c. xvi. *Remember thou hast received good things in thy life, and Lazarus evil things ; now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

The word *Amen*, with which the Lord's Prayer is concluded and sealed, as St. Jerom speaks, is an Hebrew word frequently used by our Saviour, and signifying *so be it*, or *let it be done* ; that is, we pray that all we have sued for in the foregoing petitions may be done and granted to us. It ought to be pronounced with great recollection, and with an ardent desire of having our prayers crowned with success.

ON THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION; OR, THE AVE MARIA, &c.

Hail, full of Grace, &c.—*Luke, c. i. v. 28.*

THIS is the most celebrated prayer that the Church addresses to the blessed Virgin Mary. It is called the *Ave Maria*, or *Hail Mary*, from the first words with which it begins. It is

likewise called the *Angelical Salutation*, because the beginning of it is composed of the words that the Angel Gabriel said to the most holy Virgin, when he brought her the happy tidings concerning the incarnation of the Son of God. It is composed of three parts. The first part was made by the Angel; the second part by St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist; the third part by our holy mother the Church. The first part is contained in these words, *Hail Mary, full of grace, our Lord is with thee, &c.* The word *Hail*, is a word of salutation, congratulating or wishing joy to our blessed Lady, who is called *Mary*, that is, as St. Bernard explains it, a *Sea Star* because, like a bright star she guides us through the dangerous sea of this life by the example of her shining virtues, and by her powerful intercession. The Angel admires in her the wonderful effects of the divine liberality; he considers her as the greatest object of God's favour, affection and complacency, and therefore salutes her with the noble title of, *Full of grace*; that is, not only exempted from all sin, original and actual, mortal and venial, but also enriched and replenished with faith, hope, charity, humility, obedience, chastity, and all the moral virtues in the most eminent degree, and qualified in every shape for bearing the most illustrious title of honour that Heaven could bestow on any pure creature. The following words of the Angel, *our Lord is with thee*, signify that the Lord was with Mary in a manner more intimate, more perfect, more particular, and more divine than he ever was, or will be with any other creature, as he was with her by a substantial and corporeal presence, residing personally and really in her, as in his choicest tabernacle for the space of nine months, with his whole divinity and humanity. In this ineffable manner *the Lord was with Mary*, and with none but Mary. The Angel concludes his address thus, *Blessed art thou among women*. These words were first delivered by the Angel of the Lord, and afterwards repeated by St. Elizabeth along with the following words, *and blessed is the fruit of thy womb*; for, as we read in c. i. of St. Luke, v. 28, 42, when the immaculate Virgin went up into the mountainous country of Judæa, and entered into the house of her kinswoman Elizabeth, with an intent of visiting her, Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, cried out with a loud voice and said, *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb*. She was *blessed*, as having been chosen preferably to all other women, for communicating to mankind the Source of all good and the Ocean of all grace. She was *blessed* above all women, because she received a fulness of grace proportioned to the dignity to which she was chosen. On this account all generations honour her and call her *blessed*, regarding her as the centre in which all the blessings of the Old and New Testament are drawn together, and as the fertile root of Jesse, which produced that *ever-blessed fruit Jesus*, who redeemed the world with the sacred blood that was formed of her substance. The re-

mainder of this salutation is a pious invocation of the blessed Virgin's intercession. We call her *holy*, because the Angel declared her *full of grace*. We likewise honour her with the glorious title of *Mother of God*, in imitation of St. Elizabeth, who called her the *Mother of the Lord*, when she cried out with astonishment, *Whence this favour to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* As the Church, therefore, assembled against the Arian heretics in the General Council of Nice, added unto *Gloria Patri*, &c. *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*, the words, *as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen*; so the same Holy Catholic Church, assembled in the Council of Ephesus in the year 431, defined against the Nestorian heretics that our blessed Lady is the *Mother of God*, and thought proper to conclude the Angelical Salutation with the following words, *Holy Mary*, &c. She is truly the *Mother of God*, not indeed by being Mother of the Divinity, but by being Mother of Jesus Christ, who in one and the same person is true God and true man. In the same sense she is also frequently stiled the *Queen of Heaven*, the *Queen of Angels*, the *Mother of Grace*, and the *Mother of Mercy*, because she is Mother of him who is the Fountain of all grace and mercy, and the King of Heaven.

We are far, however, from paying unto her the honour due to God alone; or from having more confidence in her than in God; or from imagining her to be more powerful or more merciful than her Son; for this would be both absurd and blasphemous. But we repose a greater confidence in her prayers than in our own, and believe them to be many degrees better and more acceptable to God than our prayers, as we know her to be a most glorious saint, and ourselves to be unhappy sinners. This humble sense of our own unworthiness makes us have recourse to her intercession, fearing lest our petition be rejected on account of our manifold offences, and because we *do not ask as we ought*, with the proper and necessary dispositions. It is evident both from intention of the Church and the nature of our petition, when we recite the Angelical Salutation, or the *Ave Maria*, &c. that it is directed more to the honour of the Son than of the Mother; it being plain that he is more honoured to whom we beg of her to address our prayers, than she whom we only desire to *pray for us*. This is our meaning and intention. We only request the assistance of her prayers, and hope to obtain blessings from God through her intercession. Hereby we acknowledge that God's gifts are not in her hands, but in his own; and consequently that all favours must come from him; that the blessed Virgin is only a creature and petitioner with us; that God alone is the Fountain of all good and the Giver of all gracious gifts and favours. Our prayers, therefore, thus backed by her intercession, may

be as truly said to be directed to God, as a petition is directed to the King when one of his favourite courtiers is requested to deliver or forward it to him by his interest.

ON THE APOSTLES' CREED.

Credo in Deum, &c.—I believe in God, &c.

AS the mysteries of faith transcend the natural reach of human wit, it was necessary to receive a knowledge of them from God. This knowledge is nothing else but faith, whereby we give an absolute and entire assent to every thing that God has been pleased to manifest unto us, whether we understand it or not; for there is no room to doubt of the truth of whatever God is the author of, since he is the sovereign and infallible truth, that neither can deceive nor be deceived. The Apostles' Creed is called the *Symbol of Faith*, because it is a mark for distinguishing the faithful from unbelievers, and contains a summary or short profession of the Christian Religion. It was made by the twelve Apostles, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and has been handed down ever since their time from age to age by oral tradition, or word of mouth, and allowed to be a rule of faith which all are bound to believe and to know according to their capacity, at least as to the substance. During the three first centuries of Christianity, there was no other Creed but it in the Church of God; but in the fourth century, when the Arian heretics attacked the divinity of Jesus Christ, three hundred and eighteen Bishops assembled in the year 325, under Pope Sylvester, in the first General Council of Nice, explained the Apostles' Creed, and drew up another more ample profession of faith, which is called the *Nicene Creed*, and is read in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Towards the latter end of the same century, the second General Council made some addition to the Nicene Creed, in opposition to Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, who impiously attacked the divinity of the Holy Ghost. There appeared also about the same time another Creed, under the name of St. Athanasius, a most illustrious defender of the faith; but it is to be remarked, that these Creeds do not contain any new doctrine, and are only a clearer and more ample explanation of what is shortly comprised in the Apostles' Creed, the different heresies that started up from age to age, and attempted to make strange alterations in the ancient faith, having obliged the pastors of the Church to use these wise precautions, in order to preserve the precious deposit of faith. The Apostles' Creed is usually divided into three principal parts. The first part treats of the first person

of the Blessed Trinity, and of the wonderful work of the creation. The second part treats of the second Person, and of the mystery of human redemption; and the third part concludes with the third Person, as the beginning and source of our sanctification. These three parts are made up of twelve short propositions or sentences, which are called *Articles*, from a similitude taken from an human body; for as the members of an human body are separated, one from the other, by different articles, so in the Creed, whatever proposition is to be believed distinctly and separately from the rest, is properly called an *Article*. The first article runs thus, *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth*. The word *believe* does not signify in this place a bare opinion, fancy or imagination, as it does when said of things that rely only on human faith and do not exclude uncertainty; but it signifies a certain persuasion and conviction; so that the meaning of it is, 'I most firmly and undoubtedly hold and profess with my heart, as well as by word of mouth, that there is one God; and I moreover believe in that one only God, that is, I am piously affected to him; for, *to believe in God*, according to the remark of St. Augustine, imports more than *to believe God*, or *to believe that there is a God*. *To believe God* imports only an act of faith, by which we give credit to every thing he has manifested, and hold it for an undoubted truth upon his unerring testimony. *To believe there is a God*, is to believe the existence of a God; this the devils themselves believe, and are thoroughly convinced of; but since their time of hope is past, they *do not believe in God*; for, *to believe in God* imports an act of faith, hope and charity, and signifies to place our trust and confidence in God, regarding him as the real object of our eternal happiness. Thus sinners *believe in God*, by the hopes they have to obtain his mercy, in using all their efforts to return to him. But the just *believe in God* after a more perfect manner, because they continually move unto him and look upon him as the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the sovereign good and last end of all things.

The word *Father* leads us into the belief of one of the most sublime and most incomprehensible mysteries of the Christian religion, that is, the mystery of the trinity of persons in the unity of one and the self-same divine nature and essence; a mystery that surpasses all human understanding, and to the knowledge of which the highest wits and the most acute philosophers never would be able to reach, were they not elevated by the supernatural light of faith. It is true, indeed, human philosophy may bring man to some knowledge of the first Cause and first Principle of all things. By the light of reason we may easily discover the Creator from the creatures. *His invisible perfections*, says St. Paul, *are understood from the creation of the world, and seen from the things that are made*, Rom. c. i. v. 20. To be convinced of the existence of an all-wise Providence and sovereign ruler that presides over all

things, governs all things, establishes order, and preserves regularity in all things, we need but open our eyes to take a view of the amazing structure of the visible world, and consider the just proportion and symmetry, the perfect order and agreeable harmony which reign through all parts of the universe. The stately canopy of heaven, the striking spectacle of numberless stars, shining in the firmament, the perpetual motions, courses and evolutions of the heavenly bodies, the globe of the earth suspended, as it were, in a balance, in the air, the constant succession of days and nights, and of the four seasons of the year; the trees loaded with fruits, the meadows diversified with flowers, the fields clothed with verdure, the land enriched with golden crops, the swelling waves of the fathomless ocean and tempestuous seas advancing with fury like so many rolling mountains, and stopped within their fixed boundaries by a few grains of sand scattered on the shore, demonstrate the existence of a God, who directs all things by his infinite wisdom, and supports them by his almighty power. It is he who, according to the expression of holy Job, has *shut up the sea with bars and doors*, and said, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and shall go no farther, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves*, c. xxxix.

All the wondrous works of the universe proclaim his greatness and goodness, and prove him to be the maker, ruler, and preserver of all things. *The heavens declare his glory*, says the Royal Prophet, *and the firmament sheweth his handy-work*, Ps. 19. *They cry out to us*, says St. John Chrysostom, *louder than any trumpet; It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves*. In short, all nature announces the absolute necessity of a superior intelligence, or of one self-existent, independent, and eternal being, antecedent to all created things; since they never could have existed of themselves, if there was not a first cause to draw them out of nothing; for, in the supposition that once there had been nothing, it is evident there never could have been any thing, because it is impossible that nothing should give a being to something.

Reason also demonstrates that it is impossible there should be more than one God, because God is so great and so perfect in his own nature, that nothing can be equal to him. This made Tertullian say, that a *multiplicity of Gods is a nullity or destruction of Gods*, it being impossible to conceive two different beings, sovereignly perfect, and all powerful. However, though there is but one only God, there are three distinct persons in God. *There are three that give testimony in heaven, The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one*, says St. John, 1 epist. c. v. v. 7. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet they are not three Gods, but one only God. The Father is the first person of the holy Trinity, because he is from himself, and the other two persons are from the Father, and yet all the three persons

are co-eternal and co-equal in glory, in majesty, and in every perfection. The Father could not be one moment without knowing himself as perfect as he is, and in knowing himself he begot his Son in himself from all eternity, *as the splendor of his glory, and the figure of his substance*, according to the expression of St. Paul, Heb. i. 3. The Father and the Son could not be one moment without loving each other, and this mutual love of the Father and the Son is the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is equal to the one and the other. But this mystery is an impenetrable abyss, not to be fathomed with the short line of our weak and limited capacity. God, who is the eternal truth, has been pleased to reveal it, and therefore, we are to captivate our understanding in obedience to his divine authority, without presuming to enquire too curiously, or too deeply into what is infinitely above the reach of human reason. The Scripture cautions us against the like curious enquiries and researches, where it says, *He that is a searcher of the majesty of God, shall be overwhelmed by the splendor of his glory*, Prov. c. 25.

The Apostles, with great prudence and wisdom, pass over, in silence, all the other perfections and attributes of God, and only make mention of the attribute of *Omnipotence* in the very beginning of the Creed, for two reasons; first, that by believing God to be *Almighty*, we might, without the least hesitation, believe all the wonderful mysteries which are contained in the following articles, nothing being more capable of corroborating our faith and hope in God than to be thoroughly convinced that he can do all things. Secondly, because we cannot confess him to be *almighty*, without acknowledging at the same time that he knows all things, that he sees all things, that he governs all things, that he orders all things for the better, that nothing happens without his permission, that every thing is subject to his sovereign empire; in fine, that he possesses all sorts of perfections in an eminent degree, as otherwise he would not be *almighty*. This attribute of *Omnipotence*, though, in reality, is also proper and equally belongs to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, is particularly ascribed to *God the Father*, because he is the source and origin of all beings, in the same manner that the attribute of *wisdom* is ascribed to *God the Son*, and *goodness* to *God the Holy Ghost*, though wisdom and goodness equally belong to God the Father. These are the three principal perfections that Divines acknowledge and reverence in God. These are the *three fingers of God*, as the Prophet Isaiah calls them, that inseparably and indivisibly applied themselves to the creation of the universe, and sustain, conserve, and govern this world ever since the creation; for if we consider the matter out of which the world was drawn, we shall admire an infinite *power*; if we consider the manner in which the world is governed, we shall acknowledge an incomprehen-

sible wisdom; if we consider the end to which this world is designed, we shall see and love an ineffable goodness.

The infinite power of God never appeared more clearly than in the creation of heaven and earth out of nothing, and therefore, immediately after the word *Almighty*, is added in the Creed, *Maker of heaven and earth*, that is, of all visible and invisible things in heaven and earth. A bare *fiat* accomplished them all. *Let them be*, said the Lord, and immediately the stately fabric of universal nature emerged out of nothing. *He spoke the word, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created*, says the Royal Prophet, Ps. 148. Though God could have created all things on the same day, and in one single instant, yet the Scripture informs us that he perfected the creation in six days, to give us to understand with what order and regularity he proceeded in this great work. Having decreed to make the world out of nothing, on the first day, which is called by Christians *the Lord's day*, he created or made out of nothing a vast and indigested mass, as it were, of matter without form, dark in itself, and void of all that order and beautiful variety of parts which appeared soon after. Thus, a painter first delineates a figure without distinction of parts and colours, and afterwards distinguishes and adorns it. Hence, Moses gives us the following account of the creation, in the first chapter of Genesis: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, &c.* that is, the substance of heaven and earth, from which all the parts of the universal world were to be produced, and with which the water is also to be understood, since it is said, in the same place, *And the spirit of the Lord was moved upon the waters*. After having created the heaven and the earth, he made the light; and though Moses makes no mention here of the creation of the angels, who are a spiritual and intellectual light, yet it is the opinion of the holy fathers that these pure spirits were created on the first day; and in consequence, St. Augustine understands that separation, which God made of the light from the darkness, to express also the separation which he at the same time made of the good angels from the bad and rebel angels. He made the firmament, the dry land and the seas, and ordered the earth to be covered with all its productions. He said, *Let there be lights made to shine in the firmament of heaven, and to give light upon the earth*, and in an instant those great luminaries, the sun, the moon, and the stars appeared. The Scripture informs us, Gen. c. i. that he extended his creative power from the inanimate to the animated part of the universe, and perfected the whole in the space of six days. On the seventh day he ceased from the great work of the creation, for which reason that day was consecrated to the divine service, and appointed to be kept holy in future times.

To form some idea of the vast expanse and greatness of the creation, and to be convinced of the vanity and nothingness of

all worldly possessions and enjoyments, we need but reflect attentively upon the discoveries made by astronomers, especially since the invention of telescopes, some of which are said to magnify six thousand five hundred times. By the aid of such telescopes the learned are enabled to take a view of the heavenly bodies, and to survey the immense regions, which they traverse with inconceivable velocity in the course of their rotation.

According to the most exact calculations, the sun is reckoned to be nine hundred thousand times larger than the whole earth, on which so many lofty mountains, ponderous rocks, and extensive oceans, seas and rivers constantly roll. A line extending from side to side would measure more than eight hundred thousand miles. The moon is counted to be two hundred and forty thousand miles distance from the earth, but the sun is said to be ninety-five millions of miles distant from it; yet this stupendous globe of fire constitutes only a minute or very little part of the grand machine of the universe or material world, which the Almighty has distributed through the immensity of space. The most learned astronomers assert that the stars, which appear to the naked eye to be little twinkling lights or torches, are in reality so many vast globes of light, like the sun in size; the least of them is bigger than the earth, and at so great a distance, that a ray of light emitted from them, at this instant would not reach the earth in less than six years, though it is generally supposed to move at the rate of ten millions of miles in a minute. They tell us, moreover, that a ball shot from a loaded cannon, and flying with unabated velocity, would be travelling almost seven hundred thousand years before it would reach the nearest of the stars. Who then can contemplate the boundless circumference of the firmament of heaven, adorned with innumerable stars, without admiring the infinite grandeur and Majesty of the Creator? Who can reflect seriously on the wonderful display of the power of the Almighty in the immense variety and greatness of the works of the creation; without looking down with a generous contempt on all the pompous trifling nothings of this sublunary world, which unhappily captivate the hearts and affections of so many deluded mortals? In heaven God created nine choirs of angels to sing his immortal praises and to be partakers of his eternal glory. Lucifer and his Apostate confederates having revolted, and being banished from heaven on account of their pride, their ruins are to be repaired by man, (*implebit ruinas*, Ps. cix.) who is the most exalted and the noblest of all the works of the creating wisdom in the lower world. By the bounty of his Maker he has an accomplished body and an immortal spirit, little inferior to the blessed angels, (*paulo minus ab angelis*, Ps. viii. The whole universe is made to serve him here, and the kingdom of heaven provided to glorify him hereafter, for a never-ending eternity; therefore, man was created on the sixth or last day of the creation, as being the end to which God re-

ferred his works ; for the end is always the first and the principal in the intention of the worker, and the last in the execution of the work. But, alas ! the happy state of innocence in which man was made by his bountiful Creator, did not continue any long time ; for Satan, who envied the felicity of our first parents, and who was jealous to see them created for the possession of that everlasting glory from which his own arrogance had discarded him, in order to render them unhappy like himself, soon seduced them to transgress the precept of the Lord, by making use of the organ of a serpent to persuade them to eat the forbidden fruit, which they had no sooner done but they forfeited their original innocence, and involved their posterity in a long train of miseries and calamities.

Four thousand years at least, had expired, after the creation, when the boundless mercy of God interposed itself, and contrived a most wonderful expedient for the redemption of mankind. This is the great mystery which the Apostles begin to unfold in the second article of the Creed : *And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord ;* that is, I not only believe in God the Father, but also in his Son, the second person of the blessed Trinity, and I put my trust and confidence in him, as being *born of the Father before all ages, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, consubstantial to the Father, by whom all things were made*, as the Nicene Creed explains it. We are not then to imagine to ourselves any thing earthly, corporeal or mortal concerning his divine Generation, or eternal Nativity, whereby he was begotten of the Father before all ages, but to adore and admire this incomprehensible mystery in silent raptures of praise and thanksgiving, especially as the Prophet Isaiah cries out, c. liii. *Who shall be able to explain his Generation ?* What we are to believe with a firm faith, is that he has two natures, the divine and human, united together in one and the same person, much after the same manner that the soul and body are joined together in a human creature, so as to make but one man. He is the *only begotten Son* of his eternal Father ; not by adoption or grace only, but by nature, and properly speaking ; for he is his Word, his interior Voice, and the Wisdom by which he has made all things. Moved by his own goodness and inestimable charity, he assumed that nature which had offended in Adam, that the divine and human nature being thus united in his person, he might be capable of satisfying the divine justice, and making an atonement equal to the injury and affront which God had received by sin. He descended for this end from heaven, not that he ever quitted heaven, since, as God, he is in all places ; but this is a manner of speaking which only signifies that, without leaving heaven, or ever ceasing to be God, he united his divine person to our nature on earth, to which it was not united before. His name upon earth was *Jesus Christ*. *Jesus* signifies a Saviour or Redeemer, and he was so called not by chance, but by the orders of heaven, because he

came to save his people from their sins, and to pay for them, that punishment which they owed to God. The price which he paid was not corruptible gold and silver, but his own precious blood. The surname *Christ*, in Hebrew *Messiah*, signifies anointed, and he was so called because he was consecrated and anointed to be our priest, our prophet, and our king; not by the ministry of man, or with material oil, as priests, kings, and prophets were of old, on account of their eminent dignity and sublime function, but by the spirit of God, and with a divine and spiritual unction, Ps. xlv. *God anointed him with the Holy Ghost, and power*, Acts, c. x. v. 38. He is called *our Lord*, and that by all the titles, and by all sorts of rights that can give authority dominion or jurisdiction. As God, he is *our Lord and sovereign master*, because he created us, he governs and preserves us by his all-ruling Providence. As Man, he is likewise deservedly called *our Lord*, because as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. vi. he *bought us with a great price*, though out of his infinite goodness he has vouchsafed to stile us his *friends, his brethren, and his co-heirs*. But in a particular and special manner, he is the *Lord* of all Christians, who are devoted to his service and bound by the most solemn vows of baptism to love and honour him faithfully as their sovereign *Lord*, from whom they derive the honorable title and name of *Christians*.

The next article treats of his temporal Nativity, as the former did of his eternal Nativity and divine Generation. *Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.* He was conceived or incarnated, not by any human generation, but after an extraordinary supernatural and incomprehensible manner, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. This wonderful work of the incarnation, considered as a work of divine mercy, goodness and love, is particularly attributed to the Holy Ghost, although the three persons of the blessed Trinity, essentially possessing the same undivided powers, have equally concurred and co-operated therein; for as the works of power and wisdom are peculiarly ascribed to the Father and the Son, though they are common to the whole Trinity, so the works of God's ineffable love to mankind are peculiarly ascribed to the Holy Ghost, though they are common to the other two persons of the adorable Trinity. The Incarnation was effected only by the second person, that is, he alone was clothed with the human nature, and became man for our salvation. His sacred body was formed of the most pure blood of his Virgin Mother, without the least violation of her virginal integrity, and a most perfect soul was created to animate his body. His birth was miraculous as well as his conception. He was born and lived in poverty, in order to suffer for our pride, and teach us, by his example, to despise the sinful vanities of the world.

The fourth article displays the dolorous mysteries of his bitter passion and death. *He suffered under Pontius Pilate,*

was crucified, dead and buried. His sufferings were of two kinds, of his mind and of his body, and began in the garden of Gethsemani, and ended on Mount Calvary; Tiberius being then emperor of Rome, and Pontius Pilate governor and Roman President of Judea. He was scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and at length crucified; that is, his hands and feet were nailed to a Cross, on which he expired in great torments. After his death, his body being taken off the Cross by the permission of Pontius Pilate, and according to the custom of the Jews, being embalmed and wrapped up in fine linen, was buried and laid in a new monument, hewn out of a rock, and was situated near Mount Calvary. The Apostles thought proper to make mention of his *burial*, for two reasons; first, that there might be less room to doubt of his death, since there cannot be a more convincing argument of a person's death, than to have a certainty of his being *buried*; and secondly, that the miracle of his resurrection might thereby be rendered the more conspicuous and manifest. However, it is to be observed, that when they teach us that *he suffered, died, was buried, rose again from the dead, and ascended into Heaven*, this is to be understood of his humanity; for his divinity could not die or suffer, it being essentially immortal and impassible. Neither did his divinity depart from his soul or body, when they were separated from each other at his death; for the whole time that his soul and body were asunder, his divinity was inseparably united both to his body in the grave, and to his soul in Limbo. He *suffered*, then, and *died* as man; and by suffering as man the torments and death which our sins deserved, and by giving an infinite value to his sufferings as God, he satisfied for our sins in the rigour of justice.

As to his blessed soul, when thus separated from his body, the Apostles teach us, in the next article of the Creed, that *it descended into hell*, and that *on the third day he arose again from the dead*. By *hell* is not meant here the place of the damned, but the hell or prison where the souls of the holy Patriarchs of the Old Testament, and other chosen servants of God, were detained captive, from the creation until that time, as they could not enter into God's glory before their ransom was paid, the gates of heaven being shut against all mankind. It was to this place that the soul of poor Lazarus was conveyed where he also *found Abraham, and reposed in his bosom*, as the Gospel says, Luke, c. xvi. It was to this place likewise, that the blessed soul of Jesus Christ went down, in order to comfort the souls therein confined, and to release them from their captivity; and they were so rejoiced at his presence, and at the happy tidings of their redemption, which he announced unto them, that their prison was turned immediately into a kind of *Paradise*. Christ our Lord foretold the penitent thief on the Cross, that this would be the case when

he said to him, *This, day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.* Luke, c. xxiii. He remained subject to the laws of death part of three days, that is, from Friday until the following Sunday, to denote, that by his sufferings and death, he had satisfied the three persons of the blessed Trinity for the sins committed in three different states, in the law of Nature, in the law of Moses, and in the law of Grace. *On the third day,* early in the morning, his soul and body being re-united, he came forth from the bowels of the earth, by his own divine virtue, and was the first that ever rose to an immortal life; for which reason the scripture calls him *the first begotten, and the first fruits of the dead.* The fortieth day after his glorious resurrection, having appeared several times to his disciples, and having completed the great work of our redemption, he mounted up triumphantly from the top of Mount Olivet into the kingdom of heaven, in the presence of upwards of five hundred witnesses, and was exalted to the highest degree of glory above all the heavenly choirs. This is the purport of the sixth article of the Creed. *He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.* He withdrew his visible presence from the world, and raised the human nature above all creatures. He is no longer liable to miseries, infirmities or sufferings, but in perfect repose and full possession of the glory of his Father. It is to signify this, and not to denote the situation or figure of his body, that the Apostles say, *he sitteth at the right hand of God the Father*; for God the Father, being a pure spirit, has neither right nor left hand, so that this is a figurative expression, accommodated to our weak understanding and manner of speaking, and signifying that Jesus Christ, as God, is in heaven, equal in power and majesty to God the Father, and as man, he is exalted by the grandeur of his dignity and glory to the highest place above all the angels and saints. The next article informs us that he is to return from thence, at the end of the world, with great power and majesty and to appear again visibly on earth in quality of Sovereign Judge of the living and the dead. *From thence he shall come to judge both the living and the dead,* that is, the good and the bad, the elect and the reprobate, such as shall be living about the time of his coming, and such as shall have died from the creation of the world. The Apostles attribute the power of judging to the Son in particular, because he is the wisdom of the Father, and he will give sentence on the day of the general judgment as Man. *He has been appointed by God to be judge of the living and of the dead,* Acts, x. v. 42. Acts, c. xvii. v. 31. John. c. v. v. 27. This power, however, is common to the three persons of the blessed Trinity, who will sit in judgment.

The eighth article teaches us to *believe in the Holy Ghost,* as the first teaches us to believe in *God the Father,* and the second to believe in *God the Son*; consequently we are not

only to believe that there is an Holy Ghost, but also to put our trust and confidence in him, he being one and the self-same God with the Father and the Son, no way inferior to them, but equal in power, in wisdom, in goodness, and in every other perfection, and having the very same divine nature and essence, according to these words of St. Jolin, 1. ep. ch. v. v. 7. *There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* We are to love him as our Sovereign good, to honour him as our Almighty Lord, and to adore him as true God, and the third Person of the ever blessed Trinity. He is the third Person, because, from all eternity, he proceeds from the other two Persons; and is the band of charity or the substantial love, whereby the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father. The name of *Holy Ghost* or Spirit, is appropriated to him by the Scriptures, not that he is more *holy* or more a *spirit* than the other two persons; but because the first and second Persons are known by the proper names of Father and Son, and we have no other proper name to distinguish the third Person from the other two Persons. The Father, indeed, is a most holy spirit, and the Son, as God, is likewise a most holy spirit. Nay, the angels are all spirits, and holy, not by excellency and essence, like God, but by participation. But as we have no other human expression to signify the emanation or procession of the third Person from the Father and the Son, better than that of *Holy Ghost*, or Spirit, this name belongs the more properly to him. Moreover our sanctification is ascribed to him, and he is the love of the Father and the Son, and because it is from God's love to us that all grace, sanctity and justification proceeds, which made St. Paul say, Rom. v. v. 5. *The charity of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.* He is the spirit of our spirit; the soul of our soul; the life of our life; for as the body is animated by the soul, so the soul is animated by the Holy Ghost, who infuses a spiritual life into us. Hence the Fathers, assembled in the first general Council of Constantinople, against the impious heresy of Macedonius, explain this article of the Creed in the following manner: *I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who is adored and glorified with the Father and the Son, that is, who is equally worthy to be adored and glorified with them; for which reason the Church has always rendered this honour to him, concluding the psalms and praises of God with this renowned eulogium of the blessed Trinity:—Gloria Patri, &c. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, &c.* This article merits our serious attention, a distinct knowledge of it being so necessary, that St. Paul, entering into the City of Ephesus, and finding there some Christians who did not know even whether there

was an Holy Ghost or not, he checked them severely for their ignorance, and asked, *in whom they had been baptized?*

The ninth article of the Creed, speaks of *the Holy Catholic Church*, which was established on the ruins of Paganism, and the destruction of the Jewish Synagogue, after the descent of the Holy Ghost in the shape of fiery tongues, on the grand solemnity of Pentecost. A knowledge of what concerns the Church is the more necessary, as it is the sacred organ by which God speaks to his people and teaches mankind what they are to believe, and what they are to do, in order to secure their salvation. It is by this means that the faithful are preserved in the unity of faith, and instructed in many points of the Christian religion, which the written word does not contain. Nay, it is only by following this rule that they know for certain that the Scripture itself is the genuine word of God, and that men, women and children, even of the weakest capacity, who cannot read, examine or interpret the Scriptures, come to the knowledge of the true sense and meaning of them. Hence after professing our belief in the ever blessed Trinity, the Incarnation and the other sublime mysteries of our redemption, the next article that is subjoined to them is that of *the Holy Catholic Church*, it being the next in importance to these divine truths, and the channel through which the revelation of them is conveyed to us with every degree of certainty.

This article of the Creed is a most convincing proof of the continual existence of the Church upon earth, and of those signal prerogatives with which Christ has distinguished her; for as it was a divine revealed truth that Christ had one Holy Catholic Church on earth, when the Creed was made by the inspired Apostles, so it is no less a divine truth, at present, that he still has one Holy Catholic Church on earth, that he had such a Church in all ages ever since the Creed was made, and that he will have such a Church to the end of the world, because the Creed, and every article of it, must be true at all times. It would be blasphemous to suppose any article of it to be false, as every article of it stands upon the same ground with all the other sacred truths of faith, that is, upon the divine revelation, and consequently must be equally believed at all times.

By the word *Church* is understood the whole congregation or society of the faithful, who are composed of pastors teaching, and of the people who are taught, and who hold the true faith of Jesus Christ. The meaning then of this article is, *I believe that there is one, and no more than one Holy Catholic Church: and I likewise firmly hold that the doctrine which she teaches us is certainly true.* The very Gospel, which we believe upon her authority to be the word of God, bids us hear her and give credit to her doctrine; and the same Gospel assures us, *that the Holy Ghost will abide with her for ever, and guide*

her into all truth, and that Christ himself has promised to be with her every day without interruption unto the end of the world, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, St. Matt. xvi. and xxviii. From these words, it clearly follows that *this Church* can never err in the doctrine of faith or morals, and that she can never fail or be abolished. Jesus Christ himself is the supreme invisible head of the Church, all the faithful are his members, and form one sheep-fold, one flock, one spiritual kingdom, one mystical body, which is linked together and animated by one and the same spirit, Ephes. c. iv. 4. But as the members of this mystical body are in three different states, the Church has three different parts and appellations: *the Church triumphant* in heaven; *the Church militant* on earth; and *the Church suffering* in purgatory. However, these different parts do not make different Churches, but one only Church. The Apostles positively exclude a plurality of Churches, saying in the Creed, *I believe the Holy Catholic Church*, which words are thus explained in the Nicene Creed, by the Fathers of the first General Council of Nice, *I believe one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church*. These are the four marks or distinguishing characters whereby the true Church of Christ may be known and discerned from all others, and is made as conspicuous and visible as *a light that shines on a candlestick*, or *a city seated on a high mountain*, Mat. v. or the sun in the heavens that enlightens the world. That Church alone in which these characters are to be found is the Church of Christ, and every congregation or society of Christians that cannot make good their title thereto is, and ought to be, looked upon as a false and pretended Church. The first mark is *unity*, or that she is always invariably and unchangeably *one and the same* in her faith; the second is *sanctity*, or that she is *holy*; the third is *universality*, or that she is *Catholic*; and the fourth is, that she is *Apostolic*, or lineally descended from the Apostles, by a lawful succession of pastors. Whoever takes an impartial survey of the different Christian societies upon earth, may be readily convinced, if he be open to conviction, that these four marks are not to be found in any of the new sects of the *latter days*, which have departed from the ancient faith, that was at first delivered to the saints, as the Scripture says, 1 Tim. iv. Jude. iii. 19. and which have forced their way into the world fifteen hundred years after the days of Christ and his Apostles. On the contrary, it will appear as clear as noon-day to every unbiassed and unprejudiced person, who does not wilfully shut his eyes against the light, that the Church, composed of all the particular Churches in communion with the Church of Rome; and therefore called the *Roman Catholic Church*, justly claims a peculiar right to all the distinguishing characters and marks of the true Church of Christ. She is *one* in her faith; for however divided her members may be by country, language, different interests, civil dissensions or wars, they all agree exactly in all points of faith,

without excepting the least article; they all concur in one worship, believe the same truths, hold the same principles, teach the same doctrine, preach the same Gospel, profess the same religion, offer the same sacrifice, and receive the same sacraments. Such unanimity, so exact a conformity, evidently shews *the finger of God to be here*; for what but an over-ruling Providence could keep such multitudes of men united in faith and religion, who so widely differ in every thing else? She is likewise *holy*, for besides that her supreme Head, Jesus Christ, is the source of all holiness, her sacraments are holy, her religion is holy, her laws are holy, and the smallest stain could never yet be shewn in her morality. Her doctrine, if attended to, conduces to all virtue, sanctity and perfection. Moreover, she justly glories in having continued, ever since her first establishment, to be the nursery of numberless holy doctors, bishops, martyrs, virgins, and illustrious saints of all orders, ages and conditions, who have all lived and died in the bosom of her communion, and whose shining merits and sanctity have been frequently attested by renowned miracles. *Catholicity*, or universality, belongs also to this Church. She is the Church of all ages and of all nations, universal in her extent, and perpetual in her duration. She is the first and the most ancient communion of Christians in the world. It is from her that all nations first received their Christianity. It is she that converted the different empires and kingdoms of the earth. In fine, this Church is *Apostolic*. She derives her doctrine, her priesthood, and her mission from the twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ, and can alone shew, as St. Augustine observes, a continued succession of bishops in her communion, descending in a direct line from St. Peter to the present bishop of Rome.

In the conclusion of the Creed, the Apostles assign four principal advantages that are attainable in the pale of the Holy Catholic Church: The first is, *the communion of saints*; the second, *the forgiveness of sins*; the third is, *the resurrection of the flesh*; the fourth is, *life everlasting*. The two first, with respect to us, regard this present life; the others regard the next life.

By the *communion of saints* is meant a mutual communication, or a common union and general participation in spirituals, that subsists between the members of Christ's mystical body, whether they be in the Church triumphant in heaven, in the Church suffering in purgatory, or in the Church militant upon earth. The saints in heaven are full of zeal to contribute to our salvation, and full of charity to help us by their prayers and intercession. The souls of the faithful departed in purgatory are benefited and relieved by the prayers and suffrages of the living, and when in heaven they also pray in their turn for them; and as there subsists a natural union between the members of a human body, so there subsists a spiritual union, in things relating to salvation, between the true faithful here on

earth, who are fellow-members of the same mystical body, and united together in one and the same faith; they are mutually assisted by the prayers, fasts, alms-deeds and other good works of each other; and they have a share in, and partake of all the sacrifices, sacraments, and indulgences of the Church, if they be living members thereof, and in the happy state of grace. As for those who wilfully separate themselves from her unity, or through their own fault, are excluded from her communion by an excommunication, they resemble a rotten or dead limb cut off and separated from the body. Such sinners forfeit all right to the benefits of *the communion of saints* whilst they continue in that unhappy condition. However, those who adhere to the Church by the profession of the true faith, and remain united to the body of the faithful, are still in the way of obtaining help and strength towards a deliverance from their spiritual disorders; for they belong to Jesus Christ, if not as living members, at least as dead members, linked to his body, and consequently they are not so far from the way of salvation as others, and they meet with several more favourable opportunities to obtain the grace of repentance and conversion; which made St. Augustine say that it is less dangerous to stumble and walk crooked in the right way, than to walk straight in the wrong way.

What a signal blessing must it therefore be to be incorporated in, and to adhere to the body of the true Church? Besides the aforesaid advantages, we may obtain therein the remission and *forgiveness of sins*, with many other graces and gifts of God. It is by the merits of Jesus Christ that all sins are forgiven, and his merits are applied to our souls in and by the holy sacraments, which he instituted for our sanctification. We first receive the remission of original sin in the sacrament of baptism. The actual sins committed after baptism are pardoned in the sacrament of penance, when it is duly administered and received with the necessary dispositions.

The resurrection of the flesh is the third advantage reserved for the members of the Holy Catholic Church. There will indeed be a general resurrection of all the children of Adam, on the day of the last judgment. At the sound of the last trumpet they will rise, in the twinkling of an eye, out of the bowels of the earth, with the very same bodies and souls. However, the manner of the resurrection of the reprobate will be very different from that of the elect. *We shall all rise again*, says St. Paul, *but we shall not all be changed*, 1 Cor. xv. The bodies of the reprobate shall rise in a condition suitable to their deserts; foul, hideous, heavy, inactive, and only fit to be the fuel of unquenchable flames; immortal indeed, but for no other end than to endure immortal torments. On the contrary, the bodies of the elect, as the Scripture informs us, shall arise glorious, beautiful, immortal and impassible; brighter than the stars, and more resplendent than the sun; able to move from

one place to another with the swiftness of lightning, and to penetrate through the hardest bodies without any resistance, as the beams of the sun pass through glass.

*Clari, subtiles, agiles, impassibilesque,
Omnes quadruplici pollebunt dote beati.*

This glorious state of immortality is reserved for the bodies of such Christians as, in this life, have been, as it were, consecrated by receiving the holy sacraments, and particularly the blessed eucharist, since Christ himself expressly declares: *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* John, c. vi.

Life everlasting is the fourth and final blessing attainable within the pale of the Holy Catholic Church, and reserved for the children of light in the next world. This is the last end of man; the ultimate reward that awaits true faith, animated by charity and good works; and it essentially consists in the clear vision and fruition of God, in the kingdom of heaven, for all eternity. O, how much are we indebted to the goodness of God for all his mercies? What thanks ought we to render him for the great benefit of our vocation to the true Church, in preference to so many thousands who are blinded by error and prejudice of education? We should endeavour to shew the purity of our faith by the purity of our morals, and lead such lives here on earth as may entitle us to reap the manifold advantages that are to be gained in the Church, and to live hereafter with Jesus Christ in the glory of his eternal Father, for ever and ever, *Amen.*

ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

Si vis ad vitam ingredi, serva Mandata.—Mat. c. xix. v. 17.

If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments.—Mat. c. xix. v. 17.

ST. Augustine calls the ten Commandments an epitome of all the most perfect and the most excellent laws, because they command all virtue, prohibit all vice, and comprise all the natural and moral duties of man to God and to his neighbour. By them we are to be tried and judged on the last day, and either rewarded with eternal happiness, or condemned to eternal misery, even as we shall be found to have fulfilled or transgressed them in our life-time. They are a summary or abridgment of all we have to do, in order to be saved, as the Creed is an abridgment of all we are to believe, and the Lord's Prayer is an abridgment of all we ask and hope for from God. At the very beginning of the world the Lord imprinted his sacred law

in the soul of man, and stamped on his heart the light of reason, which gave him a sense of his duty, and taught him what he was to do and what he was to avoid. He gave him a conscience as an inward monitor, to shew him the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, and to move him to practice the one and shun the other. Had man continued in the state of innocence, this knowledge of the law of Nature, engraved in the bottom of his heart, would have served as a rule and guide to conduct him to the end of his creation, eternal happiness; but the heart and mind of man having been corrupted by sin, the light of nature and of reason was, in process of time, so diminished, and became so darkened, that it was at length almost extinguished in the generality of mankind.

In the interim, the Almighty, in his infinite mercy, vouchsafed to take the posterity of Abraham under his special protection, as his chosen people. When they had grown into a great nation, in order to preserve them from the general corruption of the rest of the world, he was pleased to give them a more clear, distinct and explicit knowledge of his sacred law; for about two thousand five hundred years after the creation, he published it externally, in a most solemn manner, comprised in a Decalogue or Ten Commandments, which he engraved on two tables of stone. These tables were delivered to Moses by the ministry of angels, as St. Paul tells us, Galat. iii. 19, on Mount Sinai, in the midst of thunder and lightning, the fiftieth day after the children of Israel had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt, and conducted miraculously through the Red Sea into the Desert. Moses prepared himself, by a fast of forty days, for receiving the Tables of the Law, and he received them two different times: for, on finding the people adoring a golden calf, when he descended from the Mount with the first Tables in his hands, he was filled with such indignation at their idolatry, and animated with such zeal for the honour of the living God, that he dashed the Tables against the ground and broke them in pieces. After appeasing the anger of God, and sanctifying the people by his fervent prayers, he received the Tables of the Law a second time, with express orders to lodge and preserve them always in the ark of the Testament before the eyes of the Israelites, that the commandments might never be obliterated or effaced out of their minds, but that they should keep them deeply imprinted on the tables of their hearts, Prov. vii. that they should meditate on them both night and day and make them the invariable rule of their thoughts, words and actions. However it became afterwards necessary to explain and establish the divine Law on a clear and solid foundation, that mankind might be duly instructed in the manner of serving and adoring God in spirit and truth; for the Scribes and Pharisees had begun to corrupt the true meaning of several of the Commandments, by false glosses and interpretations, and to expound them in a way

agreeable to their own perverse inclinations. Hence, in about two thousand years after they had been published on Mount Sinai, they were renewed and confirmed in the evangelical law by the divine authority of Christ our Lord, who explained the genuine sense of them in clear terms, and corrected the mistaken notions and errors of the Scribes and Pharisees. He reprobated their defects and false virtues with zeal, cautioned us against their pride, hypocrisy, and vain-glory, and declared in his gospel that, *unless our justice be more abundant than theirs, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* In short, he pointed out the perfect manner in which we are to keep all the commandments, both internally and externally, both in great and small matters, and to perform all the duties enjoined us with a pure intention of pleasing God, and seeking only his honour and glory in all we do. Far from abrogating the law of the Decalogue, he inculcated the indispensable obligation and absolute necessity of observing it inviolably to the end of the world, as a rule by which we are to be directed and guided in our pilgrimage through this place of probation and banishment from our heavenly country. *I am come*, says he, Mat. v. 17, *not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*; and to shew the permanency and duration of this divine law, he immediately adds, v. 18, *Amen, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

The ceremonial part of the old law which was given to and intended only for the Jewish people, has indeed been abrogated, and the forms of judgment which regarded the external policy and civil government of their nation have ceased to be binding since the promulgation of the Gospel; but the law of the Ten Commandments, being an external manifestation of God's eternal law, and containing the moral and natural duties of man to God and to his neighbour, continues still to be as binding as ever. Hence it is that, when the young man in the Gospel put this question to our Saviour, *What must I do to possess eternal life?* he replied, *If thou wilt enter into life keep the Commandments*; whence it is evident that the observance of the Commandments is required as a necessary condition of salvation. It is not sufficient to keep some of them, but the whole of them must be observed; for, as St. James says, ii. 10, *Whoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all*, that is to say, he becomes a transgressor of the law, in such a manner, that the observance of all the other points will not avail him to salvation. The reason is, because a grievous offence against any one precept destroys charity, and, of course, defeats the end of the whole law, the chief end of whatever the divine law commands or forbids being charity. It is herein that true perfection consists. This is the foundation *on which the whole law and the prophets depend*, as Christ our Lord speaks, Mat. c. xxii. v. 40, and for this reason the Apostle says, *He who loveth hath fulfilled the law.* In fine, the whole tendency

of all the Commandments is to implant the holy love of charity in our souls, and to excite us to recover that happy union with God which we lost by the fall of Adam.

The two tables on which the Ten Commandments were engraven denote the two branches and precepts of charity: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart*, and *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. All the Commandments are reducible to these two precepts. The three Commandments of the first Table of the divine Law are comprised in the first precept; for they point out the duties we owe to God, and prescribe the three different ways in which we are bound to honour him, first with our hearts, secondly with our tongues, and thirdly with our deeds and actions. The seven Commandments of the second Table are comprised in the second precept of charity, for they teach us our duty to our neighbour and to ourselves, and direct us to do no kind of injury to another, either in his person, his life, his virtue, his honour, his character or his goods, even in thought or desire, but to wish him well, and to do him all the good, according to our ability, that his necessities require; so that the whole Law and Commandments, and all our duties and obligations, may be said to be briefly comprehended in these few words, *Love God above all things*, and *thy neighbour as thyself*. This is the very end of our being. It is for this purpose we have been placed in this world, and on this depends our real happiness both in time and eternity.

The best proof we can give of our having a true love for God is, to keep his Commandments, according to the words of our Saviour, *He that loves me keeps my Commandments*. It is not enough to believe all that he has taught; we must likewise obey what he has commanded, and faithfully observe his sacred law, in order to work our salvation. It is true indeed, we can do nothing conducive to salvation by our own natural strength alone; we are not even capable of a good thought, as of ourselves. All our sufficiency is from God, who is never wanting on his part, but always ready to assist his servants, and to give them such a supply of his divine grace as enables them to keep his Commandments, and to say with St. Paul, *I can do all things in him who strengthens me; not I, but the grace of God with me*. The obligation we are under to keep the Commandments renders it necessary for us to know them well; for how can we obey what we do not know? How shall we comply with the various duties which they prescribe, and shun the vices which they forbid, if we be ignorant of the sense and meaning of the words? We are therefore to remark that the Commandments are partly positive or affirmative, and partly negative precepts; that is to say, they command something and forbid something; they order us to practice certain acts of virtue, and they direct us to shun the opposite vices. The positive precepts are binding only at those times, and in those circumstances where the law of God requires the performance of such

acts of virtue as they command; but the negative precepts, which command us to abstain from evil, are binding at all times and in all circumstances, because it can never be lawful to do any thing that is forbidden by God's law. Thus, for example, though the first Commandment of the second Table orders us to honour our father and mother, yet this does not at all times oblige us to be actually employed in the exercise of this honour and respect; but the same Commandment forbids us to dishonour our father and mother, and therefore, we are obliged never to shew them any dishonour or disrespect at any time, or on any occasion whatsoever. The same is to be observed in all the other Commandments, as will appear more fully from the explanation of each Commandment in particular.

Some divide the first Commandment into two, and join the two last in one, making thus four Commandments in the first Table, and six in the second; but in reality, what they make two Commandments is only one and the same; for when God says, *Thou shalt have no other God but me*, he plainly forbids us to worship any other being whatsoever, as God, but himself alone; and when he afterwards adds, *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing*, &c. he only forbids in particular, what is forbidden before in general terms, so that the whole is but one complete and perfect prohibition of the horrid crime of idolatry. As for the two last Commandments, they prohibit two distinct sins, *lust* and *injustice*, and are therefore two distinct precepts; for two sins of a different nature are not usually committed by a transgression of one and the same Commandment. The external acts of lust and injustice are forbidden by two distinct Commandments, the sixth and the seventh; in like manner the inward acts and desires of these vices equally require to be forbidden by two distinct Commandments; the ninth and the tenth. This division has been always more universally adopted by the faithful, used by the Septuagint, and approved by the ancient Fathers as the most conformable to reason, though John Calvin has thought proper to reject it; but the dispute raised by him about the manner of dividing the Commandments seems to be of no great importance, provided they be entirely acknowledged and duly observed, without either adding or diminishing, especially as the Scripture does not mention which of them is the first, second, or third, &c. Every word they contain is expressed in our bibles and large catechisms, precisely as they were originally delivered to Moses, and inserted in the book of Exodus, c. xx.

The following words are premised to them by way of preface: *I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage*. Hereby the Almighty reminds mankind of the infinite power, supreme dominion and authority of his divine majesty, in order to impress us with a just sense of our duty and indispensable obligation to respect and obey his sacred law with greater fidelity. After

the aforesaid preamble, the first Commandment begins thus; *Thou shalt have no strange Gods before me*, or what is the same sense, *Thou shalt have no other God but me*. This Commandment is partly affirmative and partly negative. The affirmative part establishes true religion, the negative part forbids false religion. By the first part, we are ordered to acknowledge God's sovereign dominion over us, and to worship him with the supreme honour of *Latria*. By the second part, we are prohibited to worship idols, or to give to any creature the honour due to God alone. It was to caution the children of Israel against the worship of such idols or false Gods, that the following words were immediately joined to this Commandment, by way of an explanation to it: *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing*, &c. that is, according to the ancient version of the Septuagint, which is venerable for having been made use of by the Apostles themselves, *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven idol, or image of false Gods*. The Almighty did not judge it sufficient to forbid the Israelites, in general terms, to have no other God before him, but was pleased also to prohibit the abominable crime of idolatry in express terms; for as the people of Israel were already prone to this vice, and as they were then going into the land of the Canaanites, who adored and offered sacrifice to many idols and false deities, it was necessary to give them a full and particular explanation, of this Commandment, lest they should be corrupted by the Gentiles, and induced by their example to make graven idols, or images of false Gods, in order to adore and worship them, as the Commandment expressly says: Wherefore the words, *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing*, &c. added to the former, *Thou shalt have no strange Gods before me*, make in reality but one and the same entire Commandment, composed of two parts, which forbid one kind of sin in substance, that is, the making and worshipping such statues and images as are set up to be honoured, served and adored for God, or in which some divinity, virtue and power is believed to reside, as the generality of the Gentiles, who adored stocks and stones, and worshipped the sun, the moon, the stars, and other creatures, as deities, did believe, Rom. i. 25. Nay, as we read, Exod. xxxii. the Israelites themselves, corrupted by their bad example, made a golden calf in the wilderness, worshipped it as their God, and sacrificed to it, dancing round it and saying, *These are thy Gods, O Israel, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt*. It is also related, 1 Kings, c. xii. that Jeroboam made two calves of gold and offered sacrifice to them, saying, *Behold thy Gods, O Israel, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt*.

It is such idolatrous practices as these that the first Commandment forbids, and not the relative honour and respect that is shewn to the images and pictures of Christ and his saints, in grateful remembrance of the prototypes which they

represent. It is evident, from the Scripture, that even in the old law, the making of images was not entirely disused nor absolutely forbidden, but only conditionally, so *as not to worship or adore them as Gods*. The Lord himself commanded Moses to make two golden cherubims of image work, and place them over the oracle in the sanctuary, Exod. xxv. Moses also erected a brazen serpent in the Desert, Num. xxi. and Solomon, 3 Kings, vi. is said to have placed large images of cherubs in the Temple he built at Jerusalem. In the new law, sacred images and pictures have been always in use, since the earliest and purest ages of Christianity, as Tertullian, Eusebius, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, &c. testify. Leo Isauricus was the first that declared open war against sacred images, and ordered the image of Christ, which Constantine the great had erected, to be pulled down off the grand gate of the Imperial palace. Hence the heresy of the Iconoclastics or Image-breakers took its rise, but was afterwards condemned in the second General Council of Nice, which, insisting upon the ancient pious practice, decreed that sacred images should be placed in churches as before, and honoured with a relative honour, as they relate to Christ and his saints, and are memorials of them.

The same judgment is to be formed of the relics of the saints, which have been the instruments of all sorts of virtues, and are to be one day re-united to their glorious souls. It is not forbidden to enshrine and honour them with an inferior and relative honour. We read in the book of Exodus, c. xiii. that the people of God had such a veneration for the remains of the Patriarch Joseph, that when they were leaving Egypt, they took particular care to carry his bones with them, and to preserve them during their voyage through the desert. The Scripture also relates, Kings, book iii. that a lion guarded the body of a prophet, and that the vessel of manna, with Aaron's rod, was, by the orders of God, deposited in the Ark of the Covenant, and kept with great veneration in the holy of Holies, as lasting monuments of his power and mercy to the Israelites. It appears, from all kinds of monuments of antiquity, that the veneration of relics in the new Law is as ancient as Christianity itself. The primitive Christians set a greater value on them than on gold and precious stones, and preserved them as an inestimable treasure, as Eusebius assures us, Hist. l. 4, c. 15. They came from remote countries in quest of the bodies of the holy martyrs, and exposed themselves to the manifest danger of losing their lives for the sake of obtaining a portion of their relics. When St. Cyprian was beheaded, they spread out their handkerchiefs under him, in order to receive one drop of his blood, as it fell to the ground, Euseb. l. 4, c. xv. and l. 8. c. vi. It was this zeal for preserving the relics of the holy martyrs that enraged the heathen emperors and persecutors of the Church to that degree, that they ordered the bodie

of the martyrs to be sometimes devoured by wild beasts, sometimes to be thrown into the sea tied to a huge stone, sometimes to be burnt to ashes, and the ashes to be thrown against the wind, lest any part of them should fall into the hands of the Christians. All ancient writers attest and approve of this veneration of relicks, nor is it disapproved of by any of them except Julian the Apostate, Eunomius, Vigilantius, and such like enemies of the Christian religion. God himself has frequently approved of it by working a great number of illustrious prodigies, which he never would have done had it not been agreeable to him that the relicks of his saints should be honoured and respected. Among several other unexceptionable witnesses, St. Augustine, l. 22, de civ. c. viii. and St. Ambrose, ep. 85, assert that they were ocular witnesses to many great miracles wrought at the translation of the relicks of St. Stephen, and St. Gervase, and Protase. We read, iv. Kings, c. xiii. that the body of a dead man was restored to life by touching the bones of Eliseus, in the sepulchre; and in ch. xix. of the Acts of the Apostles, v. 12, it is recorded that the handkerchiefs and aprons that touched the body of St. Paul, cast out devils and cured all diseases. The very shadow of St. Peter also cured many sick persons, for which reason the sick and infirm were brought into the streets and laid there on beds and couches, that the shadow of St. Peter passing by might overshadow some of them, Acts, c. v.

But is not all veneration of the angels and saints forbidden by the first Commandment? It is forbidden to pay them the supreme honour that belongs to God alone, but it is not forbidden to honour them as God's special friends, because in so doing it is God we honour in them. All our devotion to them centres in God, and tends principally to his glory. Him alone we adore and worship for his own sake, as our sovereign Lord. To him alone we pay the supreme homage. For his sake we honour the angels and saints as his creatures and servants, and not as Gods or the authors and disposers of pardon, grace, and salvation, but with an inferior honour, infinitely beneath the honour due to God. It is certainly lawful to honour and reverence those whom God himself, as the Royal Prophet says, Psalms, cxxxviii. has so highly honoured and exalted in his kingdom, by confirming them in grace and crowning them in glory. And since the Scripture teaches us, Tob. xi. 12. Apocal. 5, viii. 3, that one of their employments in heaven is to pray for us, and to present our prayers to God, it must be lawful for us to desire and request them to do so. They are full of zeal to contribute to our salvation, and full of charity to help us. They have now more power with God to assist us by their prayers, and more charity to move them to it, than if they were here below on earth. They know our wants, and see in God as in a mirror, all that has any connexion with his glory and our safety and happiness. We therefore beg their prayers and

intercession, from a conviction that their prayers are better and more effectual than our own, and that this is no more robbing God of his honour, or doing any injury to the mediatorship of Christ, than to desire the prayers of God's faithful servants upon earth. The distance of place is no obstruction to their hearing our petitions, because they hear not by ears but by understanding. The Gospel tells us, Luke, xv. 7, that they rejoice upon one sinner doing penance more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance. How can they rejoice at it if they do not know it? The rich man mentioned, Luke, c. xvi. was not ignorant of the situation of his five brethren upon earth, but solicitous and concerned for their welfare, though he himself was buried in hell. It is related, i. Kings, c. xxviii. that Samuel, being dead, heard the prayers made to him by the Pythonissa at the request of Saul. Nay, it is readily granted that the devils themselves by the light of nature know our works, and hear the imprecations and blasphemies of their wicked invokers, *The accuser*, &c. Apocal. xii. 10. How can such a knowledge as this be reasonably denied to the angels and saints, who, besides the light of nature, enjoy the light of glory, and of the eternal word, who is the living image and expression of all that God has created? God has heretofore given the prophets a knowledge of future things at a great distance. Eliseus knew all that passed between his servant and Naaman the Assyrian, and in the King of Syria's bedchamber, though he was no more present to them than if he had been in heaven, iv. Kings, v. 6. Nay, though it were even supposed, but not granted, that the angels and saints did not know or hear our prayers in particular, yet it would be still useful and beneficial to invoke their intercession, because as St. Augustine remarks, *de cura mort* c. xvi. they pray for all christians in general, and more particularly for such as desire the assistance of their prayers, as we pray for the dead without seeing them or knowing where they are, or what they do. The Scripture informs us, Mach. ii. xii. xiv. xv. that Onias and Jeremy prayed after their death for the people of their nation. The tutelar angel prayed for the people of Jerusalem and the cities of Juda, Zachar. i. 12, and the kingdom of Persia, Dan. x. The angel Raphael carried up the prayers of Tobias to the Lord, Tob. 12. Jacob also, on his death bed, prayed his guardian angel to bless the children of Joseph; and Loth prayed to the angel to spare the city of Segor, and he heard his prayer, Gen. xlviii. and 19, 21. St. John prayed for grace from the seven spirits that stand before the throne, Apoc. i. 4, and the four and twenty elders had golden vials, full of odours and prayers, which they offered up to God, Apocal. v. As for the words of St. Paul, Colos. ii. 18, he only condemns the superstitious worship either of bad angels, v. 15, or of good angels, such as several of the philosophers among the Colossians, v. 8, and the disciples of Simon the magician were guilty of; for they shook

off Christ Jesus, who is the head of his Church and offered sacrifice to angels, whom they looked upon to be the creators of the world, the givers of the law, and the mediators and Saviours of mankind, even above Jesus Christ, which the Apostle expresses here by these words, *not retaining Christ the head.*

The stupidity and grossness of the sin of idolatry is so glaring and so opposite to the dictates of natural reason, that few, or none, in these civilized parts of the world, arrive to such a degree of blindness and insensibility, as to be guilty of it. There is, however, another more subtle kind of idolatry, which is but too common in the very midst of Christianity; for the sworn enemy of mankind, finding that since the establishment of the Christian religion he was no longer worshipped by external and visible idols, has taken care to substitute inward invisible idols in their place, as St. Augustine remarks. He does not excite us at present to offer sacrifice to a Jupiter, a Mars, or a Venus, or to erect Gods of metal, stone, or wood, in outward temples, in order to pay him divine honours under such figures; but he persuades many amongst us to set up spiritual idols in the middle of their hearts and in the interior temple of their souls. He tempts them to hoard up images of gold and silver in their coffers, to adore them in their cabinets, to worship them as a deity, and to sacrifice their thoughts, their affections and cares to them. Hence St. Augustine says, "Be not deceived, my brethren; you adore and serve as many idols and false Gods as you are slaves to different passions and vices, and as you love created objects with an inordinate affection. Every thing that you love better than God is your idol and your god. The object of every disorderly passion is an idol which you adore on the altar of your heart, and serve as much as any heathen did his idols." In this sense St. Paul, Rom. xvi. says, that the *Glutton's god is his belly*; and, Coloss. iii. he calls the *sin of avarice idolatry*, because money is the idol in which the miser places his affections and sovereign happiness. Others make idols of themselves, others make their idols of pride, others of vain glory, others of lust, others of something else, says St. John Chrysostom. God has only the second place in their hearts; they occupy the first place themselves. They love him on their own account. They serve him, not for his sake, but for their own. It is true, they do not offer up sheep or oxen to outward idols, as the heathens did in former ages; but they do worse in offering up their immortal souls as a sacrifice to their concupiscence. These idols, which the devil, the world, and the flesh solicit them to erect in the middle of their hearts, and in the temple of their souls, are the hardest to be extirpated, and ought to be no less avoided than the idols of the ancient Pagans.

Besides idolatry, the first Commandment forbids the sins of

infidelity, presumption, despair, simony, sacrilege, violation of lawful vows, with all the different species of superstition, heathenish and vain observations of omens, dreams, charms, divination, fortune-telling or foretelling of future things, discovering the effects of man's free will, and secrets impenetrable to nature, by having recourse to vain signs and improper means, that are not appointed by God, nor authorized by his Church, nor have any natural virtue, dependence or connection with the end proposed. For as this commandment obliges us to worship the true and living God, by the virtues of faith, hope, charity and religion, so it likewise forbids all the vices that are opposite to these virtues. In short, it commands us to worship and adore the Lord our God, *in spirit and truth*, both internally and externally, with the soul and with the body. To *adore him in spirit*, is to be firmly persuaded in our understanding that he is a being of infinite majesty, and of infinite perfection. To *adore him in truth* is to adhere to him with all the affections of soul, to subject ourselves to him by a perfect obedience to his holy will, and to testify his sovereign dominion over us and our own entire dependence on him, by acts of religion, such as prayer, adoration, oblation and sacrifice. In vain do we pretend to adore him by external acts of adoration, unless they proceed from, and be accompanied with the internal dispositions of our souls. They are but a false, lying, and hypocritical adoration, without the internal homage and worship of the heart, like unto the adoration of the unhappy soldiers who, at the time of our Saviour's passion, *bent their knee before him and cried out, Hail, King of the Jews*. The Lord complaining of such adorers, says in the Scripture, *This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me*, Mat. xv. 8, 9.

In the conclusion of this Commandment, the Almighty, who is jealous or angry with those who give his honour to any other being, proposes rewards and punishments; for rewards and punishments being the great support of all laws, it was proper they should be mentioned in the conclusion of this Commandment; hence the following appendix is joined to it: *I am the Lord thy God, strong and jealous, visiting the sins of the Fathers upon their Children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy to thousands of those that love me and keep my Commandments*. The punishment denounced against the transgressors of God's Commandments is both temporal and eternal. The temporal punishment in this world is sometimes extended to the third and fourth generation; for though no one is punished for the sins of another to which he is by no means accessary, it being just that he who sins should undergo the pain, according to these words of the prophet, Ezekiel, c. xviii. *the Son shall not carry the iniquity of the Father, nor the Father the iniquity of the Son*, yet God justly visits the

sins of the Fathers upon wicked ungodly children, who imitate the evil example, and enter into the injustices of their wicked parents, Prov. xxxiv. Kings, iv. 22. And though such parents and their children should happen sometimes to escape the temporal punishment due to their sins, yet their whole posterity will not escape it, for it is transmitted to the children of their children, *even to the third and fourth generation*. This is what they have to expect who *hate God*, that is to say, who break his Commandments; for as they who keep the Commandments are truly said *to love God*, so they who break them are said *to hate him*, at least in effect, whereby they entail not only a temporal punishment, but also eternal ruin and damnation on themselves and on their wicked children, who, like themselves, break God's law. But if the punishment with which they are threatened be so great, the reward promised to such as observe his laws is still greater and more extensive. He is angry with *the third and fourth generation of those who hate him*, but he *shews mercy to thousands of those that love him and keep his commandments*. What a comfort is it to have so good and so bountiful a master? Here we plainly see how his mercy surpasses his justice, and that he takes more delight in rewarding than in punishing. The reward he promises his faithful servants is infinite and incomprehensible, being nothing less than *life everlasting*, nothing less than the *kingdom of heaven*, Mat. xix. 17.

The second Commandment, *Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain*. We are hereby ordered to honour, bless and praise God's holy name, and forbid to profane or dishonour it by false, unjust, rash, and unnecessary oaths, blasphemous expressions, maledictions and curses, either of ourselves or others.

The third Commandment, *Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day*, &c. directs us to spend the Lord's Day in a holy rest, in exercises of piety, charity and mercy; and it forbids all unnecessary servile work and labour, and whatever is incompatible with a religious observance of the Sabbath.

The fourth Commandment *Honour thy Father and Mother*, &c. enforces the mutual obligations of parents and children, superiors and subjects, masters and mistresses; and it forbids every thing that is contrary to their respective duties.—See the Discourse *on the duties of Parents. On the duties of Children. On the duties of Husbands and Wives. On the duties of Masters and Servants*.

The fifth Commandment, *Thou shall not kill*, enjoins all the work of mercy, both spiritual and corporal, particularly pardon of injuries, almsdeeds and fraternal correction, or a charitable admonition to be given to our neighbour when we see him in danger of being led astray or doing any thing that is

prejudicial to the eternal salvation of his soul. It forbids murder and every sin that has a natural tendency, either directly or indirectly, to take away the life of our neighbour's body or soul, such as fighting, quarreling, rioting, wounding, anger, envy, hatred, revenge, scandal, and bad example. The very thoughts and will of committing murder, and the desire of any person's death, come under this prohibition; for it is in the heart and will that murder is first committed, and the passions are the roots and springs from whence all the injuries done to our neighbour's person arise. For this reason our blessed Saviour says in the Gospel, *You have heard that it was said of old, Thou shalt not kill; but I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of judgment*, Mat. c. v. 21. St. John also says, i. 3, 15. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer hath life eternal abiding in himself*. Of all the injuries that can be done to our neighbour murder is the greatest, as it deprives him not only of life and of every thing that is dear to him in this world, but also endangers the eternal loss of his soul. The Scripture ranks wilful murder at the head of those sins which cry aloud to heaven for vengeance. There is no crime that man can commit which carries with it a greater horror and remorse. Cain, who was the first murderer, is a remarkable instance hereof. Conscious of the enormity of this crime, even before the written law was given, his guilt flew immediately in his face, covered him with confusion, and tortured his mind so cruelly that he at length fell into despair, and cried out that his *wickedness was too great to deserve forgiveness*. Nothing can ever make it lawful for any one directly to procure, concur to, or hasten his own death. Whoever deliberately lays violent hands upon himself is guilty of a heinous injury against God, the author of his life, for he destroys the image of God, and usurps an authority which only belongs to God, who is the sole master of life and death. He is also guilty of a heinous injury against the community, which he robs of a member, and against himself, by taking away his own corporal life, of which he is only appointed the keeper, and which, of all temporal blessings, is the most valuable. He likewise entails eternal damnation on his soul by a direct violation of the fifth Commandment, for this crime is usually connected with final impenitence and eternal enmity with God. To murder another is the greatest injustice a man can commit against his neighbour, as has been already observed. Suicide or self-murder is of course a crime so much more enormous, as the justice and charity which every one owes to himself, especially to his own immortal soul, which is hereby destroyed with the body, is stricter and of a superior order to that which he owes to his neighbour. The nearer the person killed is allied to the murderer, the greater is the crime that he commits, consequently as no one can be so nearly related

to a person as himself, there can be no murder so criminal as the murdering of one's self. It is totally subversive of that strong principle of self-preservation which is deeply imprinted in the heart of man by nature itself. Those who can act deliberately in opposition to so powerful a principle must have their reason strangely perverted, or their mind blinded by the most unnatural passions. The only example of the kind we read in the Old Testament, is that of the impious, proud, self-conceited Achitophel, 2 Kings xvii. who hung himself in a fit of vexation, because his advice was not taken; and the only instance in the New Testament, is that of the unhappy apostate Judas, who, after having betrayed and sold his divine master, hung himself in despair, and breathed his impious soul into the jaws of Satan, by whom he was actuated. The misfortune both of the one and the other should deter all Christians in particular from taking them for their model, and extinguishing the most evident principles of reason and the voice of nature and religion, so far as to look upon suicide in distress as a remedy against miseries, and deem it an act of courage. On the contrary, it springs from a total want of courage, and implies the utmost excess of pusillanimity, impatience and cowardice; for to bear all kinds of sufferings with an unshaken constancy is true courage and greatness of soul, and the test and triumph of virtue; whereas, to sink under misfortunes is the most unworthy baseness of soul.

They are guilty of self murder who accelerate their own death by criminal excesses, surfeits, and intemperance, for their health is thereby impaired, as by a slow poison, infirmities and disorders are contracted, and their days are cut short, according to these words of the Scripture, *In much meat there shall be infirmity; and many have died by surfeits, but he that is temperate shall prolong his life*, Eccles. c. 31; and again, c. 37, *Wine has killed many*, &c. St. Augustine, tract. 12, in Jo. says, that they are accessory to their own death who will not observe the advice and prescriptions of the physicians, nor take the necessary medicines in their sickness, nor use proper precautions for the preservation of their life. They who, like the children slaughterers, Pharaoh and Herod, destroy their own infants to hide their shame, or recommend and make use of things to procure and cause abortion, are guilty of a most grievous transgression of this fifth Commandment. Nay, they are highly blameable who lay their young infants, at least the first year, in the same bed with themselves, their nurses or their servants, because they are thereby exposed to the danger of being overlaid and oppressed in their sleep. The Scripture relates a remarkable instance hereof, 3 Kings, c. iii. St. Ambrose says that they are guilty of murder who, having it in their power, do not relieve the poor in extreme necessity, but let them perish for want, as the rich glutton did to poor Lazarus, and the Priest and Levite did to the man

that was lying wounded and half dead on the road of Jerico, Luke, x. *Feed those who are famishing with hunger*, says the aforesaid holy Doctor; *If thou hast not fed them, thou hast killed them. Thou art guilty of as many murders as there are poor who die with hunger in the place where thou livest.*

But what judgment is to be formed of duelling? They are guilty of a manifest breach of the divine Commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*, who either challenge or accept of a challenge, and fight a duel. The Lombard laws indeed authorized duels, but only with a buckler and clubs. *Cum fastibus et Clypeo.* This execrable practice of barbarous extraction became more pernicious when more dangerous weapons were used, and it was usurped by private authority, though it is in itself an unnatural crime, unknown to the Jews, Greeks, Romans, and to all the civilized nations most renowned for true valour. Since the challenge sent by Francis I. King of France, to the emperor Charles, this crime, by maxims equally shocking to reason and religion, passes in the eyes of many for a test of heroism and courage, and a point of honour, by a false prostitution of those names. True fortitude enables a Christian to bear all manner of affronts for the sake of virtue and duty. Nothing is more opposite to this heroic disposition, nothing more dastardly than not to be able to look a little humiliation in the face, or bear a trifling offence with patience and constancy. Nothing more inconsistent with the character of a Christian than to trample upon the favorite Commandment of Christ, and transgress all laws both divine and human, rather than brook with a petty injury. To forgive injuries, and to suffer with humility for the love of God, is the distinguishing mark of a Christian and the very soul of the divine law. It is a glorious victory gained over ourselves, by which we vanquish our passions, and improve in our souls the habits of those divine virtues in which consists the spirit of Christianity and the resemblance we are commanded to bear to Jesus Christ. Hence the general Council of Trent, wishing to extirpate from the Catholic world the unchristian and detestable practice of duelling, has pronounced an excommunication not only against those who challenge and accept, or fight a duel, but also against all their seconds, adherents, assistants, spectators and abettors, who co-operate in any shape, either by counsel, advice, favour, or carrying the challenge, and forbids Christian burial to such as die in a duel.

The sixth Commandment, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*, enjoins chastity, sobriety and temperance, and forbids impurity, gluttony and drunkenness, and whatever tends to inflame the passions. Christ our Lord adds to this Commandment in the Gospel, and declares that *whosoever looketh at a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart*, Mat. c. v. v. 28. The vice of lust is particularly sinful in Christians, because it defiles what they become by baptism,

the members of Jesus Christ, and the temples of the Holy Ghost,
1. Cor. vi.

The seventh Commandment, *Thou shalt not steal*, obliges us to discharge our just and lawful debts; to pay servants' wages and workmen's hire; to render to every one his own, &c. It forbids all theft, robbery, fraud, usuary and extortion; all manner of cheating in buying and selling, using false weights and measures, receiving stolen goods, co-operating in the theft and retaining another's property unreasonably against his will:

The eight Commandment, *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour*, directs us to speak and witness the truth in all things, both in our conversation and in our judgments, to defend the reputation of the absent, to repair our neighbour's character to the best of our power; if we have hurt it, to retract the falsehood we have advanced to his prejudice. It forbids calumny, detraction, rash judgments, false testimonies, and all kind of malicious, exclusive and officious lies, whether in jest or earnest, in words or actions.

The ninth Commandment, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*, orders us to keep a watchful guard over our hearts and senses, to shun the dangerous occasions of sin, to resist and reject with horror all unchaste thoughts at their first appearance.

The tenth Commandment, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods*, &c. enjoins justice, even in wish and desire, and it forbids all wilful thoughts of unlawful gain, and all unjust desires of our neighbour's goods and profits, which is the vice of avarice or covetousness.

ON THE

PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH.

Si Ecclesiam non audierit, sit tibi sicut Ethnicus et Publicanus.

Mat. c. xviii. v. 17.

He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a Heathen and a Publican.

Mat. c. xviii. v. 17.

IT is evident from several parts of the Holy Scripture, that the pastors of the Church are authorized by Jesus Christ not only to teach his flock, but also to rule the Church, and prescribe spiritual ordinances, laws, precepts and regulations in matters concerning religion, which the faithful are bound in

conscience to obey, under pain of falling into a grievous sin if they willfully transgress them out of contempt or in a weighty matter. *He that hears you hears me, and he that despises you despises me*, says Christ himself to the pastors of his Church, in the persons of his Apostles, Luke x. 16. Hence St. Paul went through Syria and Cilicia, *commanding the faithful to keep the precepts of the Apostles and the Ancients*, Acts xv. 41. *Obey your prelates*, says he, Heb. xiii. 17, *and be subject to them, for they watch, as being to render an account of your souls*; and again speaking to the chief pastors of the Church at Ephesus, *Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed your Bishops, to rule the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*, Acts, xx. 28. Besides various rules and canons which regard the particular state of Ecclesiastics, there are six general precepts which regard the universal Church, and bind all its members without exception. These precepts appear to be immemorial customs practised, as to the substance, since the very first ages of Christianity, handed down by Apostolic tradition and at length reduced into precepts, as being means highly conducive to salvation and necessary for keeping the faithful in virtuous discipline. The duties enjoined by them are for the most part duties which God himself demands from us. The Church only determines the particular time, place and manner, in which we are to put them in execution.

The first precept is, *to hear Mass on Sundays and solemn Holydays, and to rest from servile work*. We are hereby commanded to set apart certain portions of our time for the service of God and the concerns of our souls, and employ them in the spiritual exercises of piety and devotion, lest if left to ourselves we should neglect them entirely. Besides the weekly Sabbath God himself ordained in the old law, several great festivals to be observed religiously in the course of the year, in memory of and in thanksgiving for the great temporal benefits he bestowed on the people of Israel, Levit. xxiii. Numb. xxviii. xxix. He forbids servile works on these festivals, and commanded them to be kept holy with the same strictness that the Sabbath itself was to be observed, by offering up sacrifices of adoration and praise to his holy name. In like manner the holy Catholic Church, following the example of God himself, and authorized by her divine spouse Jesus Christ, has ordained, besides the weekly Christian Sabbath, which is kept on Sunday the first day of the week, instead of Saturday, the seventh day, several Holidays to be religiously observed in the new law, in memory of and in thanksgiving for the different mysteries and great spiritual benefits of our redemption, which are annually commemorated on these days. All unnecessary servile works are forbidden on them, that we may have nothing to take off our attention from God's service and the sanctification of our souls. We are commanded in

particular to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass with great attention and devotion, this being the most solemn act of religious worship, and one of the most essential duties of a Christian. But as this alone is not sufficient to sanctify the Sundays and Holydays, the other pious exercises which are required that we may be truly said to keep these days holy, are left to our own private devotion, that every one may choose such spiritual exercises as are fittest and most proper for himself.

The second precept of the Church is, *To fast the Lent, the Ember days and the Vigils, and to abstain from flesh meat on Fridays and Saturdays, and the Rogation days.* Fasting and abstinence, when observed in obedience to proper authority, and for a good end, through a motive of self-denial and mortification, are most agreeable to the dictates of religion, and contribute to sanctify the soul and unite it to God. They are a general obligation laid upon us by God himself, and required as a condition, with which our repentance ought to be accompanied in order to please him, but the particular time and manner of fasting were left to be determined by the Church, according to the various circumstances of times and places, and the changeable constitutions of the faithful. The chief intent of fasting and abstinence is to do penance for our past sins, to vanquish the temptations of the devil, to curb and restrain our passions, and to mortify the body by refraining from what is more nourishing and more agreeable to flesh and blood. These are the motives the Church has for commanding her children to fast. She allows the free use of every sort of meat as good in itself and proper to be taken on every day, except at penitential seasons, and on certain days of humiliation, which she has prudently commanded and determined, because otherwise the faithful, if left entirely to themselves, would be apt to neglect this salutary and necessary duty. If she therefore forbids the use of certain meats on these days and times, it is not out of superstition, but through a spirit of self-denial. She does not look upon any meats, in the new Law, to be unclean more one day than another, or to defile the soul of him who eats them without previously washing his hands, as the Pharisees superstitiously imagined. Neither does she believe any meats to come from an evil principle, or to be evil in themselves and unlawful to be used at any time, as the Manicheans, Marcionites, and other heretics taught, who are therefore justly reprehended by St. Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 3. Such impious doctrines have always been condemned by the Church, which, like the Apostle, firmly holds and teaches that every creature of God is good in itself, and all meats which he has created, and which are publicly sold in the shambles, ought to be received and eaten with thanksgiving, and without asking any questions, or making a scrupulous enquiry whether they had been offered to idols or not, 1 Cor. x. 25.

The times prescribed by the Church for fasting and abstinence are the forty days of Lent, the Ember days or Quarter Tenses, the Vigils or Eves of the principal solemnities, and the Wednesdays and Fridays in Advent. The days of abstinence only, are the Rogation days, and all the Fridays and Saturdays in the course of the year. The general rule and manner of fasting at present is easy, when compared to the ancient practice of the primitive ages, when one meal only was allowed in the four and twenty hours, and that not until the evening, as St. Basil informs us. On fasting days they abstained not only from flesh, and from every thing made of flesh, such as broths and jellies, but also from all white meats that come from flesh, such as eggs, milk, butter and cheese, and likewise from wine. In the present age the general rule of abstinence is to refrain from flesh meat and broths on the prohibited days out of Lent, and in Lent and other fasting days to abstain from flesh and broths, and to take only one full meal of fasting fare in the day, and that not before mid-day; but a small collation is allowed at night, as a moderate support to the weakness of nature till next day. If we take a view of the whole history of Religion, we shall find that fasting and abstinence have been practised by the servants of God both in the Old and New Law. Abstinence began first in the earthly Paradise, and was enjoined on our first parents. When Noah came out of the ark, God gave him leave to eat animal food; but expressly commanded him to abstain from flesh with blood. He ordered the Israelites to abstain from leavened bread during the eight days of the solemnity of the Passover. In the Mosaick Law he laid a strict command on all his people to observe a perpetual abstinence from several of the most delicate kinds of animal food, and declared that *the eating of them would defile their souls and render them unclean*, Levit. xi. 43. Fasting was practised by Moses, Elias, Daniel, David, the Prophets, the Priests, the Nazarites, the Ninivites, &c. and the Almighty, by the prophet Joel, calls upon the people *to turn to him with all their heart, in fasting, weeping, and mourning*, c. ii. v. 12. We read also, 2 Machab. c. vi. vii. 18, 30, that the venerable old Eleazar and the seven brothers Machabees; with their mother, suffered the most cruel torments rather than break the command of abstinence and eat meat forbidden by their Law. Abstinence and fasting are likewise authorized in the New Testament. Fasting is recommended by the doctrine and example of Christ himself, who has laid down rules in the Gospel concerning the intention of fasting, Mat. vi. 17. He praised his Precursor, John the Baptist, for his abstinence, and foretold that his Apostles and all good Christians should fast after the bridegroom would be taken from them, that is, after his passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, Mat. ix. 15. The Acts of the Apostles informs us that *they ministered to the*

Lord and fasted; Act. xiii. When they had ordained Priests in every Church, they prayed, with fasting, Acts, xiv. xxii. and Acts xv. 29, being assembled in Council they gave an express precept of abstinence to the new converted Gentiles, and declared that this precept was dictated by the Holy Ghost.

The third Precept of the Church regards *Sacramental Confession*, and the fourth the *Paschal Communion*, or the receiving of the blessed Eucharist at least once a year, at Easter or thereabouts. The design of these two Precepts is to direct us and to fix the particular time, when we are obliged to obey the general command that our Lord Jesus Christ has given to the faithful, who are come to the years of discretion, to approach the sacred tribunal of penance, and to receive the adorable mysteries of his precious body and blood in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

The fifth Precept of the Church is, *to pay Tithes*, or what is customary, *to our Pastors*. The design of this Precept is to direct the faithful in discharging the natural and divine obligation they lie under to supply the temporal necessities, and contribute towards the decent support of their Pastors and spiritual guides, who dedicate their whole time and labour to the spiritual good of their souls; for, as they are strictly forbidden to follow any worldly business, trade or employment, lest it might hinder them from attending to the spiritual duties which they owe to God and to their neighbour, they are justly entitled to a competent support and livelihood from the people, for whose salvation they are bound to labour both night and day. *The labourer is worthy of his hire*, says the Apostle, 1 Tim. v. and again, 1 Cor. ix. *They who serve the altar should partake with the altar, and they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel.* In places where the Catholic religion is not at present the established Religion of the country, the ministers of the Altar and the preachers of the Gospel, studying the salvation of souls more than their own worldly convenience, and seeking rather to feed than to fleece the flock, are content with the free offerings and voluntary benefactions of the faithful, instead of tithes.

The sixth Precept of the Church is, *Not to solemnize marriage on the times forbidden, nor clandestinely, nor within the forbidden degrees of kindred.* The times in which it is forbidden to solemnize marriage, are from the first Sunday of Advent to Epiphany, and from Ash-Wednesday to Low Sunday, both included. The reason why the solemnizing of marriage with feasting, drinking, and dancing is forbidden in Advent and Lent, is because these things, which generally accompany the solemnizing of marriage, are inconsistent with the spirit of these holy times, which are set apart for humiliation, penance and prayer. The Church, in forbidding or annulling marriages between those who are related in blood and connected

by affinity, only enforces the general dictates of God and nature, and determines the particular degrees to which this prohibition is extended, and within which any marriage contracted, without a dispensation, is null and void in the sight of God. These degrees reach as far as the fourth degree of kindred and of affinity from a lawful marriage. By means of these impediments marriage connexions are extended to a greater distance from blood relations, and different families are the more united in the bonds of human society and Christian charity. As to clandestine marriages, contracted before persons commonly called *couple-beggars*, they are, for many weighty reasons, held in utter abhorrence by the Church, and the parties thus contracting, the witnesses and all the assistants, actually incur the sentence of excommunication by the very fact.

ON A RELIGIOUS PROFESSION, AND THE THREE SOLEMN VOWS OR EVANGELICAL COUNSELS.

Omnis qui reliquerit domum, vel fratres, aut sorores, aut patrem, aut matrem, aut uxorem, aut filios, aut agros, propter nomen meum centuplum accipiet, et vitam æternam possidebit.

Mat. c. xix. v. 29.

Every one that shall have left his house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and possess life everlasting.

Mat. c. xix. v. 29.

THESE are the words, says St. Jerome, this is the comfortable sentence, that stripped Egypt of its richest spoils, peopled the deserts with crowds of holy monks and hermits in the primitive ages of Christianity, and filled cities and towns with monasteries, and monasteries with thousands of religious souls, spotless virgins, devout and fervent recluses. These are the words that fired the zeal of the Augustine's the Benedict's the Bernard's, the Dominic's, the Francis's, the Teresa's, and gave rise to so many illustrious orders in the Church militant, which make a beautiful variety of different societies and communities, tending to perfection by different exercises of piety and devotion, but all united in the profession of one and the same divine faith. These, in fine, are the words of consolation, which the Almighty was pleased to whisper to your heart, my beloved brother in Jesus Christ, when he inspired you with a generous contempt of the world, and called you to a religious

state of life. He has vouchsafed in his mercy to bless you with an early inclination to piety, which being improved by a Christian education, and seconded by the good example of your virtuous parents, produced in you the heroic resolution that you have formed to seal a permanent alliance with him, and consecrate yourself for ever to his divine service. His victorious grace has triumphed over nature, and enabled you to conquer all the attractives of flesh and blood, and bid an eternal farewell to all the fawning pleasures, deceitful allurements and perishable goods of this transitory life. His holy will was the guide and oracle you consulted when you presented yourself on the day of your reception at the foot of this altar, divested of all the pomps and vanities of dress, and invested with a sacred habit, which is an emblem of humility and innocence. You then, for the love of Jesus Christ, made a voluntary offering to the Lord your God of the victim, which you are now come to immolate to his supreme majesty, by the three solemn vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. In short, the year of your noviceship being now expired, and the time of your canonical probation being completed, you wish to accomplish the great work which you have so zealously begun, and to make and ratify your profession this day, before God and his angels. Permit me on this occasion to congratulate you on the happy choice you have made, and to lay before you the signal advantages, superior excellency, and principal duties of the holy state which you are about to embrace for life, and which has been so long the favourite object of your serious contemplation and most ardent desires. Let us previously invoke the light and assistance of the Holy Ghost, reciting with devotion the sacred Hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, &c.

A religious state seems to wear a gloomy appearance in the eyes of sensual and carnal men, who are apt to judge of things, not as they are in themselves, but as they are more or less agreeable to the inclinations of corrupt nature. But if it be contrasted with a worldly state in general, its superior excellency, eminent sanctity, and signal advantages will clearly appear. The world, corrupt as it is, especially in this degenerate age of immorality, irreligion, and false philosophy, must allow that it is much easier for a Christian to work his salvation in a religious state, than in other states of life in general, since in a religious state there are fewer obstacles and more abundant means of salvation. It is evident to every one who is versed in the knowledge of the Gospel, and in the history of the primitive Church, that a religious state is precisely modelled after the holy life and doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, and strongly recommended both by their word and example, as a state of superior merit, sanctity and perfection. St. Augustine, the Patriarch and founder of religious orders in Africa, as St. Basil was in Asia, and St. Benedict in Europe, says, Epist. 89, that Christ our Lord was the first author, founder, and institutor

of a religious state of life, when he pointed out the foundation and substance of it, by recommending the observance of the Evangelical counsels to the rich young man, who had consulted him about what was yet wanting to him besides the observance of the Commandments, which he had kept from his youth. Go, replied our divine Redeemer, *if thou wilt be perfect, sell what thou hast, give to the poor, and come and follow me.* Forsake and quit thy worldly possessions. Renounce all thy earthly pretensions. Embrace a state of voluntary poverty, and come and follow me, *and thou shalt have a treasure in Heaven.* But the aforesaid young man not relishing this doctrine, and therefore withdrawing himself from the society of Jesus, Peter the Apostle made answer in his own name, and in the name of his companions, saying, *Behold, Lord, we have left all things and followed thee; we have broken through all the ties of flesh and blood, and forsaken all that was dear to us on earth, in order to devote ourselves to thy service without reserve, what then shall we have?* Jesus replied, and said, *Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me, at the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of his Majesty, you shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel. And every one that shall have left his house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and possess life everlasting.* To leave all things, without following Jesus Christ, is the virtue of a Pagan philosopher, like unto Crates, as St. Jerome remarks. To follow Jesus Christ, without leaving all things, is the case of the generality of the faithful; but to leave all and follow Jesus Christ, by an imitation of the virtues of his holy life, was the perfection of the Apostles, and is the great sacrifice of those pious souls who enter into a religious state of life, and choose Jesus Christ for their portion and inheritance for ever. In return for what they forsake on his account, he promises them, besides everlasting glory in the world to come, an hundred fold even in this life, or an hundred times as much of interior consolations, spiritual blessings, gifts and graces, which are by many degrees more valuable than all temporal goods. Mark, c. x. v. 30. Luke, c. xviii. v. 29, 30.

It is true, indeed, Christian perfection and eternal salvation are attainable in all lawful states, every profession having furnished Heaven with Saints. But in a religious state there are less dangers, less temptations, less difficulties, and greater helps, more copious graces and more frequent opportunities of merit. In it every thing contributes to acquire sanctity and to advance a Christian gradually in the road of perfection. The constant examples of virtue, that are to be met with in a religious community, the edifying models of piety, their spiritual exercises, their pious lectures, their frequent and well regulated devotions, their daily meditations, their monthly and yearly retreats; nay the very tranquillity of the place serves

to inspire heavenly sentiments and to promote the practice of good works. *There they live more purely, says St. Bernard, they fall more rarely, they rise more speedily, they are aided more frequently, and they die more securely.* There a regular distribution of holy employments takes up the day, and leaves no interstices for idleness, sloth or indolence. There every action, every occupation is a sacrifice of humility, fidelity and obedience. There the hours pass agreeably with the rapidity of moments, and moments bear the value of years by the fervour with which they are filled up in the discharge of some religious duty or meritorious work. Even their meals, their recreations, and their rest are sanctified by the purity of their intentions, and contribute to conduct them towards the happy end of their creation. In short, as the Apostle speaks, *all things co-operate to the advantage and improvement of those religious souls that love God*, and faithfully correspond with the duties of their vocation.

Whilst worldlings in general are totally bent upon the pursuit of their ambitious projects, entangling themselves in various solitudes and perplexing cares, whilst they are devoting the best part of their time to pride and vanity, to dress and dissipation, and trifling away the precious hours in grasping at empty shadows, glittering phantoms and frivolous amusements; religious souls are occupied both day and night in doing on earth what the angels and saints are incessantly doing in heaven. Far from placing their happiness in the gratification of their senses, or in glutting themselves with the gross pleasures that the world presents to its deluded votaries, their thoughts are entirely bent on pleasing God, and seeking first his heavenly kingdom. They wisely choose the better part, like Mary in the Gospel, and feel happy in reposing with her at the feet of our Lord in spirit. They decline all earthly nuptials to follow the Lamb in the white robes of purity and innocence. By their vows they give unto God not only the fruit but also the tree; not only the good actions they do, but also their very liberty itself. They look down with a generous disdain on all worldly enjoyments, and according to the expression of the Apostle, *they count all things as dirt, so that they gain but Jesus Christ.* For his sake, and that they may imitate the poverty of this divine original the more perfectly, they voluntarily abdicate their lands and livings, their property and earthly pretensions, whether they be much or little, regarding nothing, calling nothing here below their own; and that from a conviction that the selfish words *mine* and *thine* are the unhappy source of numberless dissensions and broils in the world. Nay, what is more, they freely renounce the very will and desire of having and possessing any thing in particular; so that they may be truly said, in the language of St. Paul, *to have nothing, and yet to possess every thing*, since he possesses every thing who enjoys all that he desires and wishes for in the world, if they have any

desire, it is to be rich in grace, in virtue, in merit, and to amass spiritual treasures for a happy eternity. If they seek any pleasure, it is that which results from the practice of good works, and from loving and glorifying God: If they look for any comfort, it is that which arises from the testimony of a good conscience. If they are fond of any ornament, it is of the interior ornaments that decorate their souls. Their eyes are only open for Heaven. Their mouths are open but to chaunt the divine office and sound the praises of the Lord. Their ears are open but to hear his voice and their hearts but to love and adore him.

The hearts of those who are wedded to the world, according to the remark of the Apostle, 1. Cor. c. vii. are divided between the Creator and the creature; they are often involved in many tribulations, perplexities and disappointments, which embitter their very pleasures, and give them many an aching heart under all the outward specious appearance of temporal happiness; they are frequently tortured with the stings and remorses of a guilty conscience, and groan like slaves under the galling yoke of their passions, which render them as miserable as the unfortunate Balthazar, king of Babylon, was in the midst of all his feasting, mirth and jollity. On the contrary, those who are consecrated to Religion, and keep up the spirit of their state, enjoy an inward content, calm, and peace of mind, to which the delusive charms of the world bear no proportion, and without which the most potent monarch on earth would be effectually miserable on the throne. In the midst of all their penitential rigours and austerities, they experience how sweet it is to serve God, as the Royal Prophet speaks, and they enjoy by anticipation in this life, a foretaste of that endless happiness which is prepared for them in the next; for they overflow with spiritual consolations, which descend from Heaven like a refreshing dew into their souls, and replenish them with a certain unspeakable pleasure that sweetens all their seeming hardships, takes off the edge of their sharpest trials, and animates them to advance in the road of perfection, not only without reluctance, but with alacrity and fervour. Being divested of all inordinate attachments, and free from the distracting cares, anxieties, and tribulations of a worldly life, they give their hearts to their Creator, whole and entire, without division or reserve, and feel a pleasure in loving and serving him that infinitely surpasses all the pleasures of sense. They find in their fasts and abstinence a more refined delight than a glutton does in feasting at a luxurious table, a more real satisfaction in subduing their passions than the greatest profligate does in gratifying them, and a more solid joy in their voluntary poverty than a miser does in his wealth and opulence. O what a happy, what a blessed state therefore, must a religious state of life be, and how far superior to a worldly state! It must be acknowledged that the world is full of snares on every side;

its vanities and pleasures are fraught with deadly poison ; its enjoyments vanish away like smoke. We cannot be friends to it and to the world to come. They are both enemies to each other. We must renounce the one, if we wish to enjoy the other ; for this reason, St. Paul cautions the faithful, who are engaged in the world, not to set their hearts and affections on it, but to live so in it as not to be of it, to use it as if they used it not, and to possess it so as not to be possessed or captivated by it. St. John also, in the second chapter of his first Epistle, gives the same advice, saying, *Love not the world, nor those things that are in the world, for the world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof.*

Methinks I now perceive you pouring out your heart before the altar of God, and replying in the words of the Apostle, *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world.* Methinks I perceive you breathing forth in tender sentiments of piety, what the Royal Prophet heretofore said of himself in the second book of Kings, c. xxii. *The Lord has stretched out his hands from the highest Heavens to protect and save me.* He has withdrawn me from the snares and temptations of a treacherous world. He has rescued me from the deluge of iniquity that overspreads the face of the earth. He has preserved me from the corruption of a sinful Babylon. He has delivered me from the danger of a turbulent and boisterous ocean. He has conducted me into a safe harbour, a peaceful retreat, a comfortable asylum. He has called me to the sacred ark of Religion. What return shall I make him for his goodness? What thanks shall I render him for the signal blessings and special graces he has vouchsafed in his great bounty to confer on me? *I will, in imitation of the Royal Prophet, sing the mercies of the Lord for ever. I will offer unto him a sacrifice of praise, and render my vows to the Most High, Ps. xlix. and again, Ps. lxxxiii. I have made my choice, and am determined to live in the house of my God in abjection and humility, rather than dwell in the tabernacles of the ungodly ; for one day spent in the house of the Lord is better than a thousand spent in the world.* Such are your sentiments. Such is your decided opinion and resolution. But before you proceed to the full accomplishment of your wishes, let me request your attention to a few other interesting remarks on the particular nature of the vows which you are determined to make this day, and to observe, with the divine assistance, unto the hour of your death.

You are sensible that the three solemn vows of voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, and entire obedience, constitute the essence of a religious state of life. They are so many powerful antidotes against the principal impediments of man's salvation, or the three-fold concupiscence mentioned by St. John, the beloved Disciple of our Lord, 1 Ep. c. ii. v. 16, and called *the concupiscence of the flesh*, or an inordinate love of carnal and sensual pleasures ; *concupiscence of the eyes*, or an

inordinate love of riches and temporal goods ; and *pride of life*, or an inordinate love of worldly honours, dignities and preferments. To these three general heads the Apostle reduces all the different kinds of sins that are committed in the world. These are the three great idols that the world adores, and they are counteracted and trampled upon by the three sacred vows of Religion. By the vow of poverty, a religious person sacrifices all the external goods of fortune ; by the vow of chastity he sacrifices his body and senses, and by the vow of obedience he sacrifices his own will, his own liberty, judgment and understanding. Thus he sacrifices every thing he has and possesses on earth, and fastens himself as it were, with three nails to the cross, so as to be able to say with St. Paul, *With Christ I am crucified*. He dies to the world and to all its pomps and vanities ; he dies to himself and to his own will, and offers upon the day of his profession, a perfect holocaust to the Lord, by giving himself entirely up to him without reserve, as a pure victim of divine love. This made St. Thomas of Aquin call a religious profession a spiritual martyrdom, and a second baptism on account of the happy effects it produces in the soul.

The vow of voluntary poverty, according to the same holy Doctor, is the basis of Evangelical perfection and of a religious life. Our blessed Saviour began his first Sermon on the Mount by recommending it. He placed it at the head of the Eight Béatitudes, and laid it down as a foundation, when he pointed out the way of perfection to the rich young man in the Gospel. The spirit of this Evangelical poverty does not so much consist in indigence or in a total want of worldly substance, as in an absolute disengagement of the affections from temporal goods, and in an inward disposition of the heart to part without grief or reluctance, with whatever a religious person has in the world, if his superior should find it expedient to require it, in order to try his spirit, as the Lord formerly tried the fidelity of Abraham, by commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac. In such a case he is not to look upon himself as the particular owner or proprietor of what he has only the use of, but to regard every thing he holds as the property of his community, which he is always to prefer before his own private interest, as was practised in the first Christian Community, which the Apostles founded at Jerusalem ; for, as the Scripture informs us, all their goods were in common, and no one was allowed to possess any thing in particular, as appears from the dreadful punishment that was inflicted by St. Peter on Ananias and Saphira, for having concealed a part of the substance which had come into their hands.

The second vow is chastity, by which the religious freely bind themselves to observe a perpetual celibacy, and an inviolable purity both of soul and body all the days of their life. The Holy Fathers have filled whole volumes with the praises of virginity. St. Cyprian calls religious virgins consecrated to God, the most illustrious portion of the flock of

Christ. They are compared to angels in human bodies, and to palm trees planted by the water side, which being bedewed with the copious streams of divine Grace, produce the precious fruits of every virtue. St. Francis of Sales calls chastity the lily of all virtues, the ornament of the body and the beauty of the soul, whereby those who, through motives of virtue, lead a single and chaste life, resemble the angels of God. Christ himself, when on earth, shewed a particular predilection for virginity and for those who embraced it. He would have none but the purest of virgins for his mother. He ever manifested a special love for his virgin Disciple, St. John, who on this account was called the beloved Disciple, and at his death he recommended his Virgin Mother to none but his Virgin Disciple. He also recommended Virginity in the strongest terms, in ch. xix. of St. Matthew, and in ch. xx. he compared Virgins to the angels of God in Heaven. In like manner the inspired Apostle St. Paul, recommended Virginity both by his word and example, in the strongest terms. He extols and represents it in the most amiable light, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, c. vii.

The third vow is obedience, by which religious persons give up their own will entirely, in order to do God's will in the person of their superior. The Scripture assures us that *obedience is better than sacrifice and victims*; for in sacrifice external things are only offered, but by obedience we sacrifice what is dearest to us on earth, our own will and liberty. St. Thomas of Aquin says that obedience is the chief of the three vows, and the principal part of the holocaust that the religious offer to God on the day of their profession; *great is poverty, says he, greater is chastity, but the greatest is obedience*. By the first we offer our worldly substance; by the second we offer our body, but by the third we offer our spirit and soul. This made St. Augustine cry out and say, *O holy obedience, what shall I say of thee? Thou art the spouse of the living God, the ladder of Heaven, and the chariot wherein the just man is carried up into Paradise like the prophet Elias*.

May the Father of mercies and giver of all good gifts, grant that by a steady and faithful observance of these three vows, you may attain to the perfection of the happy state to which you so ardently aspire. May he accept in the odour of sweetness, the voluntary sacrifice you are now going to offer him in the face of the Church; may he give you grace to be a credit to the holy order, wherein you are to be incorporated this day, and preserve you from ever looking back to the world upon any pretext whatsoever; since as the Scripture phrase expresses it, *He who once puts his hand to the plough, and looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of Heaven*. In fine may he crown your proceedings with the great gift of final perseverance, that you may always continue an edifying model of piety and a shining example of virtue in the religious com-

munity of this house, which you have freely chosen in preference to any other, and which, after a canonical trial of your vocation, is satisfied to admit you to your solemn profession. Take courage then, and put your whole confidence in the Lord your God, whose grace is all sufficient to support and bear you up under every restriction to which you may be subjected, and every difficulty you may have to encounter. Let charity and humility be your constant guides and the ruling principles of all your actions. By these means you will one day surely arrive at the happy end you have in view, and be entitled to the blessings which Christ our Lord has in store for those who heroically forsake all things to follow him; namely, *an hundred fold in this world, and life everlasting in the next*; which I sincerely wish you, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

ON THE

DUTIES OF RELIGIOUS PERSONS.

Immola Deo sacrificium laudis, et redde altissimo vota tua.

Ps. xlix. v. 50.

Offer to God a sacrifice of praise, and pay thy vows to the Most High.

Ps. xlix. v. 50.

WHEN God placed our first Parents in the earthly Paradise, it was not to lead an idle, indolent life; it was, as the Scripture teaches us, to labour and employ their time in a way pleasing to their Creator, and conducive to the happy end for which they were created. In like manner, when he calls any of the faithful to a religious state, and places them in a Monastery as in a kind of Paradise, it is not that they may trifle away their precious time in sloth and idleness, or spend their days in ease and indulgence; but that they may labour for his honour and glory, and their own sanctification. It is, that they may employ themselves both late and early in his divine service, and in cultivating the garden of their souls. It is, that they may lead an active as well as a contemplative life, and improve the talents entrusted to them for the benefit and edification of their neighbour. Whilst worldlings are pursuing their vain amusements and favorite pleasures; watching, praying, sacred lectures, spiritual retreats, fasting, abstinence, self-denials, mortifications, penitential austerities, with the holy exercises of charity and works of mercy, are to be the usual occupations of religious persons consecrated to God by solemn vows. A state of this kind, says St. Thomas of

Aquin, is the most excellent and the most perfect of all states, as it unites contemplation and action, which, like the two sisters, Mary and Martha, go constantly together and mutually assist each other.

But the more holy and the more perfect their state is, the greater ought to be their watchfulness not to fall short of their obligations, and lose the precious graces of their vocation. How much soever they may be filled with the spirit of their profession in the beginning, they will fall away by degrees, if they grow careless and remiss in the midst of their career, and stop on the road of perfection before they arrive at their journey's end. Plants and fruits that cease to grow and ripen begin to decay by degrees, and are in manifest danger of perishing; and, as St. Jerom remarks, those who are swimming against the stream of a rapid river, will surely be carried back by the current when they grow weary and remiss in pushing forward. Thus the primitive fervor of religious persons will soon languish and decay, and they will be hurried away by the torrent of corrupt nature, if they lose sight of the end for which they entered into a religious state and overlook with contempt or neglect, through lukewarmness and tepidity, the means prescribed by their rule and statutes, as necessary for attaining this happy end. Permit me then, for my own and your instruction, to request your attention to a few remarks on these important means and necessary duties, &c.

Religious persons should beware of flattering themselves into a false security; for though their state must be acknowledged to be an holy and perfect state in itself, as being modelled after the example of Christ and his Apostles, yet it is not exempted from its dangers and difficulties. The cloister is not holier than Heaven, says St. Augustine, where pride changed an Angel into a devil; nor is it holier than the earthly Paradise, where disobedience ruined our first parents; nor is it holier than the sacred college and community of the Apostles, where avarice made an Apostle, who had renounced the world, betray his Divine Master, Jesus Christ. This should excite us all to stand continually upon our guard, and to *work our salvation in an holy fear and trembling*. Nothing but the grace of God can secure us, as we *carry our treasure in brittle vessels of clay*, which may be easily shattered to pieces. We should be always humble in our own eyes; conscious of our nothingness and insufficiency, and frequently beseech the Giver of all good gifts to strengthen our weakness, and to crown our poor endeavours with the great gift of final perseverance; for *he alone who perseveres to the end shall be saved*. It is not then enough to begin well; we must proceed from good to better, make constant advances in virtue, and labour incessantly to attain to a greater purity of heart and soul. Every day should find us more meek, more patient, more humble, more fervent in charity, more rich in good works, it

being an undoubted maxim, that *not to advance and press forward in the road of perfection is to fall back and lose ground*, as St. Bernard remarks, *In via Dei non progredi est retrogradi*. Yet it unhappily happens, says St. Jerome, that though many begin well, few reach the mountain of perfection; and that more sinners are converted from vice to virtue, than there are just who advance in goodness and increase their fervor in virtue. *Cæpisse multarum est, ad culmen pervenisse paucorum*.

He who wishes to nourish the spirit of piety in his soul, and to revive the fervor with which he first embraced a religious state, should renew his engagements from time to time; he should frequently call to his remembrance the end which he proposed to himself at the beginning, saying in imitation of the devout St. Bernard, *Ad quid venisti Bernarde?* Why have I quitted the world? For what purpose have I become a religious? Unless I live up to the spirit of my vocation, and observe the rules and sacred ordinances of my order, I may deservedly be called the trifle of the age; I shall neither be a secular nor a regular; neither enjoy the consolations of this world nor of the next. The Lord in his great mercy has vouchsafed to call me from my kindred and relations to a Land of Promise; he has rescued me, like Lot, from the midst of a corrupt, treacherous world; he has preserved me, like Noah, from being drowned in a deluge of iniquity; he has delivered me from the bondage of a sinful Babylon; he has withdrawn me out of a turbulent and dangerous ocean; he has conducted me into a place of safety, into the harbour of salvation, into an asylum of piety, into the ark of religion, into the very school of perfection. What return should I make him for such special graces and favours? The signal benefit of my vocation calls upon me for the most grateful acknowledgment, and should serve to redouble my fervor, inflame my love, increase my zeal, and enliven my piety and devotion; since, as the divine Scripture assures me, *much will be demanded from him, to whom much has been given: Cui multum datum est, multum petetur ab eo*. Can I do less than enter into the sentiments of the Royal Prophet, and sing the mercies of the Lord for ever. *He has broken my chains, and restored me to the sweet liberty of his children; I will therefore render my vows to the most High, and sacrifice an host of praise to his name*.

Such are the sentiments that religious persons should be penetrated with; such are the pious resolutions which they should frequently form. It is not sufficient for them to bear the name and wear the habit of a religious order, or to assist at all the parts of the Divine Office, and comply with the other external duties of religion by a certain rotation or custom; they must also cultivate their interior and look carefully into their hearts to see what passes there. They must study to follow the example of their Founder, and clothe their

souls with his virtues, for the habit alone will not render them worthy of the honourable appellation of his children and followers, nor entitle them to a participation of his glory in Heaven, unless the copy after the virtues of his holy life, and endeavour to imitate his charity, his humility, his penance, his zeal, his piety and devotion. *Si filii Abraham, sitis opera Abraham facite*: If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham, said Christ formerly to the Jews. If you be the children of St. Augustine, St. Francis, St. Dominick, &c. do their works, walk in their footsteps, observe their rule, aspire to their perfection; for, as St. Thomas of Aquin teaches, Religious who do not aim at perfection are but empty shadows of religion.

The perfection that they are obliged to aspire to, does not consist in doing many things, as Martha erroneously imagined; but this error was condemned by Christ. Neither does it consist in performing grand and extraordinary exploits; for there have been many great saints and models of perfection, whose lives were hidden and obscure, and whose actions had nothing resplendent or shining in them. A constant fidelity in small things, is a great and heroic virtue, because it is a constant exercise of humility, and a crucifixion of self-love and pride, which finds a gratification in performing extraordinary actions that attract the eyes and admiration of the world. Hence St. Bonaventure says, the perfection of religious persons consists not so much in the more heroic exercises of a religious state, as in doing common things in a perfect manner and with great purity of intention. The three solemn vows constitute the very essence of this holy state, and therefore they are before all things to be faithfully observed, without any infraction either in thought, word or deed. The smallest duty is not to be undervalued, or wilfully neglected and transgressed, since *he who despises little things falls by degrees into greater faults*, which at length ruin the soul and extinguish the love of God in the heart. Though he may happen to be free from the gross crimes of the world, yet for want of a religious spirit some interior vice will be apt to insinuate itself insensibly into his affections, give him a distaste for his spiritual duties, and make him seek the things that flatter self-love, till in the end he loses all sentiments of God.

Charity, or the love of God and our neighbour, is the end of all the vows, and of the rule and constitutions of religious orders; for which reason St. Augustine wisely begins his rule, by inculcating the indispensable obligation and necessity of charity in both its branches. *Before all things, my dearest brethren, says he, love God and your neighbour.* Be so closely linked and united together by the bonds of charity and mutual love; as to have but one soul and one heart in the Lord. It is charity, says St. Jerome, that makes Religious and Monks; with it convents are a kind of Heaven upon earth; without it they are a hell and shipwreck of souls. Without it no sacrifice, no good

work can be acceptable to God. He is most perfect who is most united to God by it. It is the accomplishment of the Law, the plenitude of the Gospel, a concise abridgment of all Christian morality, and the very life and soul of a religious community. The greatest enemy of charity is self-love, which spiritual writers call the seminary of numberless faults and imperfections, the root of jealousies, dissensions and factions, the pest of every society, and the ordinary cause of the dissolution of religious houses; for *a house divided in itself cannot stand*, but must necessarily fall to ruin and destruction; and a ship must spring a leak and sink when its planks are not joined and closely united together. Nothing is a greater bar or obstacle to the progress of a soul in charity, than a blind inordinate self-love, for it obstructs the effusions of grace and the operations of the Holy Ghost, who only kindles the flames of divine love in the heart in proportion as it is purged from the poison of self-love. As long as this inordinate love is cherished in the heart, and suffered to reign without controul, it infects actions the most virtuous in appearance, and seduces those who do not well know themselves, under various subtle disguises and false pretences. It insinuates itself under a thousand forms, and prompts those who are slaves to it, to seek their own interest and their own gratification only in all things, even in the most sacred functions, without any regard to the honour and glory of God, or any true love or zeal for the welfare of their neighbour. It is owing to its baneful influence, that so many Christians, not only in the world, but even in religious houses, make no progress in a spiritual life, and find no change for the better in their souls, after passing several years in the constant practice of the exterior duties of religion. They frequent the holy sacraments, fulfil all the precepts of the Church, keep all the fasts, give alms to the poor, and fail in no outward work of mercy, piety and devotion; yet they do not advance in the paths of true virtue, nor arrive to any degree of perfection by all their devotions and exercises of piety, but crawl in the mire of their imperfections, and continue still subject to various faults that are incompatible with real sanctity. The reason is, because they do not lay the axe to the root; they do not study to extirpate the seeds of their vicious inclinations by the virtue of interior self-denial and mortification. They do not cut off the source of their disorders. In short, they do not labour to purge their souls from the poison of self-love; wherefore it is no wonder that, though they have borne the yoke of penance for many years, and are, perhaps, grown old in the outward exercises of religion, they continue still the same, equally prone to anger and passion, to envy and resentments, wedded to the world, greedy of applause, fond of admiration, and as morose, sour, fretful and peevish as ever.

One of the most effectual means to remedy this evil, and improve in the love of God, is attentive meditation, or the spirit of interior recollection. St. Bonaventure calls it *the soul of an Ecclesiastic*, and says, that a religious person without it, is a body without a soul to animate it, and does not deserve the name of Religious. The Holy Ghost attributes all the disorders of mankind to the neglect of serious recollection. *With desolation*, says the Scripture, *is all the earth made desolate, because there is no one that considers in his heart*, Jerem. c. xii. v. 11. Hence spiritual writers warmly recommend at least half an hour's meditation or mental prayer every day. The practice of it is not so difficult as some people imagine; on the contrary, it is easy even to the meanest capacities, as it consists in considerations and affections, or in thinking of God and loving him, who is the most worthy of our love. Thinking is so natural to us, that we cannot help thinking of something, and when the mind is once attentive, penetrated and convinced, the heart follows, of its own accord, the natural bent of the mind. We think, without difficulty, on those things we are inclined to, or that nearly concern our interest, and use our endeavours to compass the end we aim at. Even though our mind be subject to various fancies and distractions, the importance of the matter will fix it and make it steady. This we experience every day. The sick man has his thoughts easily and frequently fixed on the recovery of his health; the merchant on his gain; the farmer on his crop; the usurer on his interest; the ambitious man on honours and preferments. He that is engaged in a weighty lawsuit, thinks of it both night and day, and leaves no means untried that can favour his designs, no obstacle unremoved that stands in the way; and shall thinking and reflecting be only difficult when we are to think and reflect on matters of the utmost consequence to the everlasting welfare of our souls? Shall loving be difficult to a soul made to love? The true lover finds pleasure in thinking of and speaking with the object of his love; nor is he ever at a loss for words to express the tender sentiments of his heart; and shall a Christian, shall a Religious find it difficult to think of the Sovereign Good? Shall he be at a loss for words to speak and pray to God, and devote himself to him in the closet of his heart?

Spiritual writers prescribe certain rules and methods for meditation, and divide it into three principal parts, wherein the three powers and faculties of the soul are to be exercised. To seek and pursue the acquisition of any good, it is necessary to know, to love and to desire it. We do not covet what we do not know. *Ignoti nulla cupido*. Knowledge produces love, and love creates a desire. The first part of mental prayer consists in considerations and reflections, whereby the mind is enlightened and instructed; the second part consists of the inflamed pious emotions, affections and elevations, that are

raised in the soul by means of said reflections; and the third part consists of the resolutions and good purposes, that are made and entered into in consequence hereof. The memory is to represent the subject of the meditation; the understanding is to consider the heavenly truths that are discovered; the will is to be affected and stirred up to practical inferences and good resolutions. One need but have his salvation at heart to be capable of this, and to set apart some proper time in the day for so useful an exercise, and so powerful a means to fortify his soul against the many dangers to which it is exposed during the course of this mortal life.

As *pride is the greatest vice of a religious person*, says St. Isidore, *so humility is his greatest virtue*. His progress in humility is the measure of his advancement in evangelical perfection. This is the first step to solid virtue, and the basis of true sanctity. It is the corner-stone of the spiritual edifice; he that does not build upon it, builds upon sand. St. Augustine, speaking of this virtue, says, *The first degree to perfection is humility, the second is humility, the third is humility; and as often as you ask me, I will answer the same thing, that it is humility*. Not but there are other precepts to be observed; but if humility does not precede, accompany and end with our good works, our grand expectations of Heaven will be defeated, and the fruits of all our good actions will be blasted and destroyed. We may watch and pray, fast and mortify our flesh as much as the ancient fathers in the desert have done, and when we have performed all this, if we do not look on ourselves with the spirit of humility as unprofitable servants, and give all honour and glory to God to whom they are due, our penitential austerities will be forfeited, and our portion shall be allotted amongst the reprobate. We may, perhaps imagine that we go on well, and and that we are something, but without humility we are nothing in the eyes of God, who often condemns the hearts of those whose actions the world admires, and who reproves as false justice and disguised pride, those very virtues which seem brightest in the eyes of men.

Let us, then, sound our own hearts, and see if our sentiments and morals be conformable to the principles of the religion we profess. Let us live up to the spirit of our vocation, and reserve sufficient time and leisure for self-examination, pious reading, mental prayer and private devotion, that we may constantly nourish in our souls a spirit of charity, humility and piety, and have our hearts united to God in the discharge of our exterior functions and duties. Without this precaution, the contagion of the world with which we are frequently obliged to converse, will be insensibly contracted, and we shall be in danger of losing in the next life the fruits of all our honours in this life.

By occasions, says St. Francis, *the strong themselves become weak and fall*, and by too great a familiarity with the world

religious persons run the risk of imbibing its spirit, and of becoming in the end strangers to the essential spirit of their profession, which is a spirit of penance and holy retirement. Nothing engages them more dangerously in the commerce of the world, nothing more enervates in them the discipline of abstinence and mortification, than to frequent places, assemblies and meetings, where intemperance is indulged. For this reason it was strictly forbidden by the rule of St. Benedict, for any monk to eat or drink out of his monastery, unless he was at such a distance that he could not return that day. The very name of a monk implies that he ought to love retirement, shun dissipation, and live sequestered and separated from the world, except when charity calls him abroad to attend the business of his heavenly Master, and serve his neighbour. St. Jerom advises all ecclesiastics to shun sumptuous banquets and delicious entertainments, and St. John Chrysostom says, that they ought to avoid worldly curiosities, idle amusements and diversions; and all superfluities and niceties in their clothes, in their furniture, and in their table. St. Thomas of Kempis says of himself, that whenever he mixed with the world, he returned less perfect to his cell; for which reason he disapproves of unnecessary excursions in Religious, and recommends retirement in the following remarkable words: *Cella frequentata dulcescit, deserta amarescit*: A cell, well frequented, becomes sweet and pleasant; but if it be frequently and abandoned and deserted; it grows bitter and disagreeable.

As to the rest, my dear brethren in Christ, let me exhort every one of ye, with apostolic words, to continue in that vocation in which he was called, 1 Cor. c. vii. v. 20, and to live up faithfully to the spirit of it, considering each other as children of the same family, under one head, actuated by the same views, following the same rule, and closely united together in the bonds of charity, in imitation of the first Christian community founded in Jerusalem, which, as the Apostles inform us, seemed to have but one heart and one soul in the Lord. O, how good and how pleasant is it for brethren to live thus united together! cries out the Royal Prophet, cxxxii. v. 1. The ample rewards prepared for you in the kingdom of Heaven are abundantly sufficient to alleviate every burden you may have to undergo, to sweeten every hardship you may have to encounter, and to animate you to acquit yourselves of every religious duty belonging to your state with zeal, fervour and alacrity; for, as St. Francis observes, *the labour is short, the recompence is eternal*: which I heartily wish you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

ON THE

SANCTITY OF THE PRIESTLY CHARACTER,
AND THE IMPORTANT DUTIES
THEREUNTO ANNEXED.

Attendite vobis, et universo gregi.—Acts, c. xx. v. 28.

Look to yourselves, and to all the flock.—Acts, c. xx. v. 28.

THUS spoke St. Paul to the priests of Ephesus, whom he had assembled, in order to animate them by a lively and pathetic exhortation to a faithful compliance with all the duties of their ministry. Permit me, my beloved brethren, to make use of the same words, in order to remind you of the obligations of ecclesiastics, who are destined to edify and instruct the flock of Jesus Christ. They are to labour first for their own sanctification; for how shall they be able to establish the kingdom of God in others, unless it be established within themselves? How can they hope to kindle the fire of charity in the breasts of others, if they suffer it to be extinguished in their own breasts? How can they expect to instruct others well in the great practical truths of religion, if their own hearts be not penetrated with them? How can they pretend to infuse Christian virtues into the souls of others, if they themselves be unacquainted with them? And how shall they aspire to their own perfection, if, destined by Providence to labour for the salvation of others, they neglect to point out the road to Heaven to those, whom they are obliged to conduct to it by their word and good example? A Priest, an Evangelical Labourer, to discharge the duties of his ministry, ought to be continually attentive to himself, and lead an holy and irreproachable life. *Judgment must begin from the house of God*, says St. Peter, 1 Ep. c. iv. v. 17. He should look narrowly into his own interior, and preach to himself what he would afterwards preach to others. The care of his own soul, and the regulation of his interior, is his first and most essential obligation; for it will avail him but little to draw others to God unless he labours to sanctify himself, and to treasure up lessons of true virtue in his own mind. In two words, *he is to look well to himself and to all the flock*, and to keep his thoughts and affections always united to God by interior prayer and meditation, whilst he is active and vigilant in the discharge of every exterior duty that he owes the public. Behold the entire plan of the following discourse. Let us previously invoke the aid of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin. *Ave Maria.*

Although the sanctity of God, and the grace of Christianity, subject all Christians to an obligation to be holy, yet it must be acknowledged that this duty is more particularly enjoined on the priests of Jesus Christ, our High Priest and Sovereign Pontiff. Let us hear the great Apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, c. vii. v. 26, where he explains in a sublime style the grandeur and the sanctity of the Priesthood, and of the Sacrifice of the Law of Grace. According to his idea, a priest is a man holy, innocent, pure, spotless, separated from sinners, elevated above earthly things by the sublimity of his virtues, as well as by the eminence of his character, so as not to stand in need of offering victims to God for the expiation of his own sins, as his ministry obliges him to offer daily for the sins of the people. To shew you the obligation all priests lie under to be holy, I might found the sanctity of the priesthood on the grandeur of its origin; I might tell you that God, after having chosen among all the nations of the earth the descendants of Abraham to be his favourite people; after having composed the body of that people of twelve tribes, he chose the particular tribe of Levi as the most holy, to draw from thence the Ministers of his Tabernacle, and made another choice in the same tribe for the priesthood, reserving to himself alone the choice of the sacrificer who was to offer the victims, and menacing with death all those, who without order and a particular unction would presume to touch the ark or handle the censer. Even after the captivity of Babylon, in the very days of disorder, usurpation and sacrilege, no one assumed the priesthood but those of the tribe of Levi, which the Lord had chosen to exercise it, and in which he therefore required sanctity, saying expressly in c. xxi. of Leviticus, *Be ye holy, because I the Lord am holy*. The holy unction they received at their ordination, the garments they wore, and the many holy ceremonies by which they were prepared for the sacred functions of their ministry, served to represent and remind them of the virtues with which their souls were to be adorned, Ps. cxxxi. They were commanded to shun the corruption of the world, to touch nothing that was unclean, and to hold themselves constantly in a state of purity, that they might be qualified to carry the vessels of the Lord, Isaia. c. lii. v. 11, and to immolate the victims which their law prescribed. I might draw from hence a just inference to convince you, that those who exercise the functions of the Christian Priesthood, which are formidable to the very Angels themselves, contract an obligation to be holy and pure; for if, in the Mosaic Law, which is only a shadow of the Law of Grace, such sanctity and purity were required by Almighty God in the Levites and Aaronic Priests, what sanctity and purity must be necessary in the Priests of the Evangelical Law? But the types and figures of the old Law having given way to the reality and truth, and Jesus Christ, our High Priest, according to the order of Melchisedech, having es-

tablished a new Priesthood, founded not on a vain genealogy or carnal succession, like that of the Mosaic Law, but on the eternal nativity and the glorious life of himself risen from the dead, let us seek, in the sanctity of the functions of the Christian Priesthood the necessity and obligation they are under to be holy, who exercise it. What sanctity does not a state require, all the functions of which are so holy and so formidable? What is the employment of a Priest of Jesus Christ? It is a faithful dispensation of all the treasures of the wisdom, of the knowledge, and of the charity of God. It is a continual exercise of his mercy and justice. It is to be the minister of his spiritual power, the dispenser of his word and of his sacred mysteries. It is to reconcile the earth with Heaven, in carrying to the throne of God the prayers and the sighs of men, and bringing down to men the graces and mercies of God. It is to pay to the Almighty the public homage of praise and adoration in the name of the whole Church. It is to judge sinners in the tribunal of penance, to weep bitterly between the porch and the altar, to intercede as a mediator with God for the living and the dead, and obtain their reconciliation and salvation from him. It is to offer up the tremendous sacrifice and pure oblation of the new Law, to render present on our altars the body of Jesus Christ, and distribute it to the faithful. What innocence, what sanctity do such sacred functions require? Would they not do honour to the Angels themselves, and should not the purity of those who exercise them be truly becoming Heaven? Should not their hands, which are daily employed in touching and handling the immaculate flesh of the Son of God be spotless? Should not their tongues, which are purpled with his sacred blood, be purer than the rays of the sun? says St. John Chrysostom.

It is not sufficient for the Priests of the new Law to avoid the gross crimes of the world, and march in the way of the commandments; they should even run in the way of the councils, and advance from virtue to virtue, it being an undoubted maxim, that *not to press forward in a spiritual life is to fall backward*. It is not enough for them to be good, they ought to proceed gradually from good to better; their justice ought to abound; their good works must be more copious; their sanctity ought to be more than ordinary. It was a conviction hereof that heretofore filled several great saints with an holy fear and religious terror, which made them shun and decline ecclesiastical honours, dignities and promotions, with no less timidity than they now-a-days are sought for with avidity. Church history informs us, that they frequently fled to solitary places, and hid and concealed themselves there, for fear of being forced to consent to their own ordination; choosing rather to live in obscurity, abjection and humility in the house of God, than, by being raised to an high state, and undertaking the awful charge and duties of the priestly cha-

racter, to run the risk of involving others as well as themselves in eternal ruin, and of incurring the terrible punishments which are denounced against those, through whose fault and neglect a single soul happens to perish. They believed that it was the same thing to be called to the Christian Priesthood and to sanctity, and that the ministers of Jesus Christ, who offer up his body in the tremendous sacrifice of the altar, ought to live according to his spirit, and imitate his sanctity and perfection. *Their office*, says St. John Chrysostom, *requires a great soul and much courage; they stand in need of a thousand eyes on every side, that whilst they undertake to convert and reclaim others from sin, they may not suffer themselves to be perverted.* The duties and dangers annexed to their character are proportioned to its pre-eminence and advantages. *Great is their dignity*, says St. Jerom, *but great also is their ruin* if they dishonour their profession and scandalize the faithful by their disorderly conduct, instead of edifying them by the lustre of their virtues. *They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world; their lips are the repositories of knowledge*, and the people are to learn the Divine Law from their mouths; because as the Prophet Malachy speaks, c. ii. *they are Angels of the Lord of Hosts. They are the Ambassadors of Heaven*, as St. Paul calls them, sent not to one city but to the whole world, and strictly charged to enlighten and guide it by their word and example, and as it were, to season it with the spirit of Christian humility, meekness and charity. It is incumbent on them to be purified, and to purify others; to be sanctified, and to sanctify others; to approach the Lord, and to lead others to him. *O happy Priests!* cries out St. Augustine, *who thus live up to their sacerdotal character! Nothing in this life is more blessed, but at the same time nothing is more dismal in the sight of God, nothing more miserable, nothing more damnable, when they acquit themselves negligently and without interior spirit.* The more sublime their state is, and the more sacred their functions, the deeper is their fall and the more deplorable is their guilt, when, instead of restraining sin in others they sin themselves, and by their licentious life and bad example, are an encouragement to others to tread in their footsteps and fall into the precipice. *Nothing*, says St. Gregory the Great, *can be more prejudicial to the honour of God or to the cause of virtue.* On the last last day, Ecclesiastics of this description will be accountable, not only for their own personal sins, but also for the sins of others whereof they are the unhappy cause, and for the souls of all those whose gifts they abuse, and for whose conversion and salvation they are no way solicitous. The Scripture denounces several dreadful woes against them, and assures us that *the blood of those who perish through their means will be required at their hands.* *Wo be to ye*, cry out the Prophets Isaias and Ezechiel; *wo be to ye, O Pastors of Israel and Priests of the Lord, who, instead of*

conducting the people into the paths of truth and justice, by the example of a pure and regular life, lead them into precipices by your scandals, and are like so many nets expanded for the ruin of those who are eyewitnesses to your immoralities. O hear the word of the Lord: Are not the flocks fed, by the pastors? You fed yourselves, and did not feed my flock. You have not laboured to fortify the weak, to heal the sick, to bind up the wounds of the infirm. You have neglected to bring back the strayed sheep, and to go in search of those that were lost, so that my flock has become a prey to the wild beasts of the field through your fault. Wo therefore, be to ye, O Pastors of Israel, and Priests of the Lord!

It is then the indispensable duty of Priests and Pastors of the Church to look well to themselves, and to all the flock, as the Apostle speaks. They are stiled in Scripture The Sentinels of Israel, the Fathers of the Faithful, the Shepherds of Souls, the Tillers of the Lord's Vineyard, and the Ministers of his Word. Hence arises the obligation of preaching the word and instructing the flock; for how shall the *sheep hear the voice of the shepherd*, if the shepherd does not speak to them? And what a strict account will the shepherd be called to, if he suffers the sheep to be devoured by the wolf through his neglect and indolence? St. Gregory the Great says, that those who are charged with the care of souls, and who, loving their own ease and convenience too much, bury their talents under ground, like the sloathful servant in the Gospel, and lead an indolent, inactive life, will be responsible on the day of judgment for the sins which they might and ought to have prevented, and for as many souls under their charge as are lost to Heaven, when they might have easily converted and saved them by faithfully discharging their ministerial duties.

The good shepherd is ever solicitous for the divine honour, and for the safety and welfare of his flock. He allows himself no repose, when the salvation of a soul is in question, but flies with cheerfulness to the practice of every spiritual work of mercy, in order to co-operate with Jesus Christ in rescuing sinners from the jaws of hell, and peopling the kingdom of Heaven with saints. To co-operate thus with Jesus Christ is, according to St. Denis, *de cœlest. Hierar. c. 3. the most divine of all divine works*, and so meritorious in the sight of God that, as St. Chrysostom teaches us, *to gain over one soul to the Lord is more than to distribute innumerable riches to the poor*. A good Ecclesiastic will, therefore, like St. Paul, look upon the gaining of souls as *his crown and his joy*. Actuated by a pure and disinterested zeal, he never loses sight of the great end of his mission, but is ever attentive to a true sense of the duties annexed to the priestly character, which principally consist in breaking the bread of life to the little ones; in instructing the ignorant; in comforting the afflicted; in visiting, with tenderness and assiduity, the sick; in relieving

as much as in him lies, the distresses of the indigent ; in reclaiming, after the example of his heavenly Master, with temper, with gentleness, and with meekness, the stubborn and refractory members ; and in conducting all those under his care in the way of salvation. Nothing can damp his courage in defending the cause of virtue, or make him dissemble the truth. Intent only on the greater glory of God, and desiring nothing more than to please him, and to plant his love in all hearts, he is guarded against the illusions of a false zeal, which seeks itself and its own interest. He despises the applauses of men, and is equally insensible to their praises and censures. He unites the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove, according to the instructions given by Christ our Lord to his disciples. In short he applies suitable remedies to every spiritual disorder, *preaching the word, urging in season and out of season ; reproving, beseeching, rebuking in all patience and doctrine*, as the Apostl^e recommends, 2 Tim. iv.

An humble Clergyman of middling talents, but of strict integrity, solid piety and disinterested zeal, will often do more good in this case, and have a more powerful influence to reform the heart of a sinner and infuse virtue into it, than a florid orator, who, with all his erudition and glare of pompous eloquence, is swelled with pride and presumption, and void of all real piety. It is true, a man of science and eloquence may argue and convince ; but to convert and reclaim sinners from their evil ways in the privilege of those who are virtuous, zealous and pious. *Those things are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to the little ones*, Mat. c. xi. v. 25. A Preacher, divested of virtue, zeal and piety, is no more than a *sounding-trumpet*, and an empty shadow of an Ecclesiastic, although he *should happen to speak with the tongues of men and angels*. He is a *body without a soul to animate it*, says St. Bonaventure, and resembles a taper placed on a candlestick, which consumes and exhausts its own substance, whilst it diffuses rays of light on every side. Nothing is so eloquent or so persuasive as an exemplary life ; it proves the preacher to be sincere, and stops the mouths of the enemies of truth and virtue. Words alone are empty sounds in the air, says St. Augustine ; but edifying examples are like loud claps of thunder, that strike with an irresistible force. *Verba sonant, exempla tonant*.

Ecclesiastics, who wish to see their labours crowned with success, should edify the faithful by a decency of behaviour, sobriety of life and purity of morals, so as to become models of virtue and *examples of the flock from the heart*, as St. Peter speaks, 1 Ep. c. v. v. 3. They should be inwardly penetrated with a feeling sense of the great truths which they announce to others. Unless their words be animated, they will not inflame the hearts of their hearers, according to this saying of the

Poet, *Ardeat orator, qui vult accendere plebem*. They may strike the ears, but will not be able to mollify the hardened heart of the sinner, nor work the conversion of his soul : for it is the language of the heart that speaks to the heart, and possesses the art of softening it and of subduing all the powers of the soul. However, as this is the work of the almighty hand of God, his sacred unction and heavenly benediction ought to be humbly implored by frequent and devout prayer ; for, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. iii. *Neither he who plants, nor he who waters is any thing, but God who gives the increase.*

The heart of a good Ecclesiastic, charged with the care of souls, should resemble the Ark of the Testament, as St. Gregory the Great says. A competent knowledge of the holy Scripture, and of the Law of God, with the rod of true zeal and the manna of sweetness and affability, should be always deposited therein as the two tables of the Law, the rod of Aaron, and the manna from Heaven, were constantly preserved in the Ark. The charge and direction of souls is, according to St. Gregory Nazianzen, the art of arts, and attended with so many difficulties and dangers, that it requires an ample stock of spiritual knowledge, discernment, meekness, patience, prudence and circumspection, to qualify a Priest for embarking in it. *Ars artium regimen animarum*. St. Thomas of Aquin comprises the necessary qualifications of a spiritual Guide, in these two verses :

*Confessor dulcis, affabilis, atque suavis,
Prudens, discretus, mitis, pius atque benignus.*

It is evident, *that if the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the pit*, Mat. c. xv. v. 14. Those who undertake the arduous and weighty charge of souls, without a sufficient knowledge of the duties thereto annexed, are justly compared to an ignorant physician, who, to the great prejudice of his patients, presumes to practice the art of medicine ; and to an unskilful pilot, who rashly undertakes to steer a ship through a dangerous sea, and thereby drowns both himself and the crew entrusted to his care, as St. John Chrysostom observes. Hence the Councils and Canons of the Church, which Ecclesiastics should make it their business to know and observe, frequently inculcate the necessity of employing their vacant hours in instructive lecture, useful study, inward prayer and recollection ; that they may constantly nourish a spirit of fervent piety in their souls, and not be exposed to the danger of being perverted themselves, whilst they undertake the important charge of converting and directing others. Charitable remonstrances, entreaties, tears and supplications, are the most effectual means to gain sinners over, and are therefore stiled by the Councils, *the only weapons of Clergymen*. It is particularly recommended to them to enforce their instructions and advice by good example, and by observing a religious gravity and modesty upon all occasions and in all things, in their dress, their looks,

their deportment, their conversation, and in all their gesticulations and actions. What is readily overlooked in others frequently passes as a great fault in a Priest. Frivolous and idle things, in the mouth of a man of the world, pass for trifles, but in the mouth of a Priest they are called blasphemies, as St. Bernard remarks. *Nugæ in ore sæcularis sunt nugæ, in ore sacerdotis sunt blasphemæ.* His life, says St. Thomas of Aquin, is a clock to which many look up. If the clock goes well, it is not much attended to; but if it goes wrong, it is undervalued and thought little of. The Canons condemn an officious and unbecoming intermeddling in temporal matters, as reflecting dishonour on the character and dignity of the priesthood. *No man waging war for God, entangles himself with worldly affairs,* says the Apostle, Tim. 2 Ep. c. ii. The Canons likewise interdict games of hazard, idle sporting, and the frequenting of theatres, taverns, public houses, meetings and assemblies, where intemperance is indulged, and the pomps and vanities of the world are set forth and displayed with their most enticing allurements. *Whosoever will be a friend of this world,* says St. James, *becometh an enemy of God,* c. iv. v. 4. Clergymen should not forget, that by their state and profession they are separated from the world, and consecrated to God; consequently, that it is incumbent on them to shun such worldly pastimes and idle diversions as may lead them into dissipation, and withdraw them from the regular performance of those duties which they owe to God and their neighbour. They are to conduct themselves in the world so as not to be of it, and *to use it as if they used it not*, according to the advice of St. Paul. The contagion of the world, which they have quitted, may be easily contracted by too great a familiarity with it, and its poison may be insensibly imbibed by not keeping at a proper distance from the dangerous occasions of sin. If they have their thoughts constantly wandering abroad, and neglect to watch carefully over their own interior, when they are called on to discharge the exterior duties of their ministry or obliged to converse with the world, they will run the risk of falling away gradually from their first fervor, like the Bishop mentioned in ch. ii. of the Apocalypse. The love of God will begin then to languish in their souls; the spirit of piety will be drained out of their hearts; the most sacred functions will be profaned; and at length it shall be as with the people so with the Priest, as the Prophet Isaias speaks, c. xxiv. v. 2. *Sicut populus, sic sacerdos.* To prevent so dreadful an evil, St. Bernard advises Ecclesiastics not to give themselves up entirely to the care of others, or to worldly conversations, so as to neglect themselves or forget that the salvation of their own souls is their first and most essential obligation. Let them, says this holy doctor, resemble a shell which is replenished within, and overflows without emptying itself, and not be like a conduit or pipe, which evacuates itself continually, without

reserving within an ample portion of the salutary waters it conveys abundantly to others. *Concha, non canalis.* When they return from their labours and the ministerial duties of their vocation, let them reserve sufficient time and leisure for holy retirement and self-examination, for mental prayer and private devotion.

Inspire, O Lord, the Ministers of thy Altar and Preachers of thy divine Word with a lively sense of their important duties, and with an active zeal to fulfil them to thy greater honour and glory, to the edification of their respective flocks, and the eternal salvation of their own souls. Remove all scandalous abuses from thy Church, and give us all grace to become worthy members of so illustrious a body, that we may be for ever united to thee hereafter in the kingdom of Heaven; which is the blessing I cordially wish ye, my brethren, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

*Mundus non mundus, mundos qui polluit; ergo
Qui sequitur mundum quomodo mundus erit?*

FINIS.



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